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DACA-BUR-R

20 March 1975

Director, US Army Military
History Research Collection
Carlisle Barracks, PA 17103

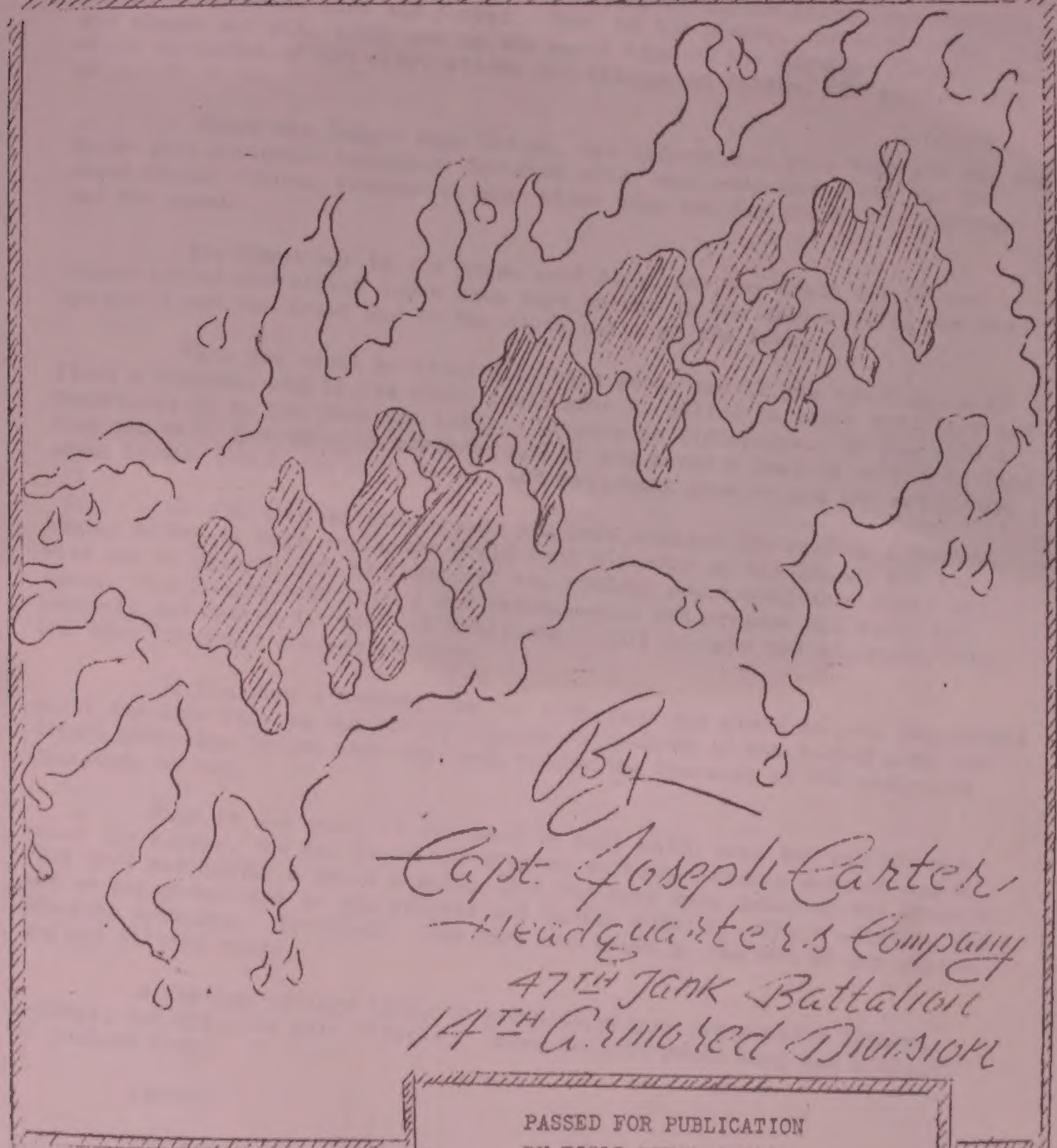
Attached for your collection is a copy of a writeup of a WWII small unit action. The unit was the 47th Tank Bn, 14th Armored Division. The action was a battle at Hatten, Germany, which was the most intensive combat action seen by the battalion. As such, this item might be useful for future military historians of this period.

Sincerely,

William Hambley

William A. Hambley, Jr.
LTC MI USAR

1 Incl
as



PASSED FOR PUBLICATION
BY FIELD PRESS CENSOR
/s/ D.D.S. 1 Feb 45.

PUBLISHED BY: G-3 I & E

THIS PUBLICATION MAY BE MAILED HOME

Sixteen miles due north of Strassbourg-on-the-Rhine lies Hageunau and above Haguenau lies the forest. Now, in the winter, the woods stand black and always wet with cold; and on the north edge of the Haguenau Forest, ten miles northeast of the city, stands the village of Hatten. Or what is left of bloody Hatten.

Anzio was longer than Hatten, the infantrymen will tell you who dug in on that miserable beachhead for week after shell-shocked week; but for sheer bloody vicious tenseness, hour after hour and day after day. Hatten was the worst.

The Kraut was in the house next door, and the Kraut was in the houses across the street (more than once he was in the cellar while you were upstairs) and the Kraut was on the hills north of the town.

When you moved he fired with burp guns; and if you moved again he fired a bazooka; and if you still could move he called in corps artillery and registered in on you from the hills. It made no difference. If you were a lone man he'd open up with mortars; and if you moved a tank he called in bazookas by the squad, mortars, tanks, and anti-tank guns -- and the artillery.

If you were an infantryman you laid against the wall in a cellar, hoping to God no high explosive would land directly on the house; and you went out to attack, and to fight off the vicious counter-attacks again and again. You fought with mortar and machine-guns and grenade and rifle and bayonet, and called in your own artillery -- all to take one miserable house. And then the Kraut counterattacked.

If you were a tanker, you sat with your eye glued to your telescopic sight and your foot on the firing trigger -- because if you looked away you didn't have time to get your eye back before the bazookas or the anti-tank guns were on you.

When it was over, it was hard to tell which were the streets and which the houses, the artillery had blasted so much. Hardly a house had a roof left and hardly a house a wall. And the dead were lying on the streets and on the ground and in the cellars and in the rubbish. Kraut soldiers and American soldiers. Civilians. The girl who tried to run out of her cellar and got fifteen steps.

A farming village lying on a gentle slope; two hundred houses, perhaps, and with two main streets. Three hundred yards long and a couple of hundred deep.

Hatten.

The Kraut was stopped at Hatten. Paratroops he had in there, cocky from a long rest behind the lines; and SS troops dead in their neat black uniforms; and crack tankers from more than one Panzer Division that had rolled over Europe, long ago. And infantry. Infantry and infantry and infantry. And he had intended to break through at Hatten and through the Forest to Haguenau, and then on to the wide plain at Strassbourg.

We moved up the night of January the 12th.

A tank battalion.

A tank battalion of the 14th Armored Division (commanded by Lt. Col. James W. Lann of Amory, Mississippi, promoted on the field of battle), minus Company B, still fighting in another engagement near Drussenheim.

About 25 medium tanks, thirty tons of armor plate apiece; more than 15 light tanks, sixteen tons each; assault tanks and tanks, vehicle recovery; mortars; kitchen trucks and gas trucks and ammo trucks; half-tracks and trailers; maintenance vehicles and wreckers and welders and peeps. Company A and Company C. Company D. Headquarters Company and Service Company. Battalion maintenance and battalion medics. Tank battalion minus.

Blackout.

If you were a driver, you saw nothing except the vagueness of the fields alongside, the dark strip of the road a few feet ahead, the deeper black of the woods. All the light in the world was the twin red blackout-tail-lights of the vehicle in front and the indirect glow of the dials on the instrument panel. If you were a vehicle commander you stood up every now and then to check your column -- it was too cold to stay standing. You could see the long line of tanks and half-tracks behind you, creeping ominously along through the blackness, blackout lights just barely visible. Every now and then you heard the angry howl of a 500-horse tank engine as the driver shifted for a bad stretch of road.

The bivouac party under Lt. Tom Anderberg, of Hudson, South Dakota, had gone ahead. It had found a big house for the battalion C.P. and had gone down the streets, knocking at each door and asking for rooms (Soldaten schlaffen herein? Americanische soldaten?) and he found places for all the men to sleep in the Alsatian homes, and courtyards in which to park the tanks.

We moved in before dawn, the sky a faint gray instead of black and the stucco-and-timber farm houses of the village huddled together like gray stone sheep with slanted red tile roofs, just under a ridge of land and around a bend in the road.

The bivouac party was waiting for us to show us the battalion C.P. and the houses where we were to live; but the tanks stayed on the streets because we were to start the attack at 0530. The crews checked them over.

In the dim darkness you could hear a driver rev up his engine, and nearby the artillery was firing, the sharp cracks of the 105's sounding as if they were in the next street. And you could hear the whine and the empty whooom of incoming mail somewhere close enough.

It was simple. To defend, we were to attack Hatten with the infantry and drive the enemy out. The infantry would pass through us and take up defensive positions on the high ground beyond the town.

In the C.P., Col. Lann was bending over the situation map with Maj. Alton S. Kircher of Gladstone, Michigan, the exec. Lt. Paul C. Willis, the communications officer, of Canton, North Carolina, was checking his radios and Capt. Solly A. Spivek of Chicago, Illinois, was setting up his map.

Hatten was due east of us then.

A single track French railway ran east and west, passed a few hundred yards south of Hatten and continued on east. Halfway between us and Hatten, also north of the railroad, lay the town of Rittershoffen. Another unit was to clean out Rittershoffen.

This, then, was the situation:

We were to pass to the south of Rittershoffen, along the railroad; we were to swing north and drive into Hatten. An infantry battalion was to be with us; the infantry was to be to the south of the railroad, and we to the north.

The Kraut could see us from the high ground north of Hatten. For the land slopes gently up from the north edge of the Haguenau Forest to the crest above the Seltzbach River, and it was on that crest that the Kraut had set up his observation posts. Hatten is about half way up that gentle slope.

From the east end of Rittershoffen, too, you could see into Hatten, and you could fire into Hatten. And the Kraut held the east end of Rittershoffen with infantry and two captured American 57mm anti-tank guns.

Capt. Harold D. Persky of St. Paul, Minnesota, commanded Company C. At least, he did command it -- he commanded it that morning. He was to be the attack company; and one of his platoons, commanded by Lt. Seth Sprague of Hingham, Massachusetts, was to be attached to the infantry battalion moving south of the railroad. At least, Lt. Sprague was in command of the platoon that morning. Or what was then the platoon.

Company A, Commanded by Capt. Richard A. Tharpe, of Macon, Georgia, was in support. So were the assault guns commanded by Lt. Robert C. Harper of Auburn, Nebraska. In reserve was Company D, commanded by Capt. Henry P. Tilden of Weymouth, Massachusetts.

Let us follow Lt. Sprague.

As the eastern sky turns from gray to lighter gray, directly ahead of him, his tanks are standing on the narrow frozen street of a small Alsatian town. Beside him rise the steep-roofed, plaster and timber houses, black in the early morning. The engine of his tank is idling easily and he is standing in the turret, hatch open, muffled in his combat suit and scarf. It is cold.

His radio is crackling softly and then the yellow warning light flashes on and he hears his call word crackling.

"Move out." Move out."

"Wilco," he says, and switches to interphone. "Move out," he says to the driver. "Move out."

The tank engine roars suddenly in his ears and he does not hear the driver shift into gear. The tank lurches a little and pulls ahead. He feels its familiar grating progress as the steel tracks claw at the ice-hard roads. The engine roars again and the driver shifts to third. Sprague's head is even with the windows of the houses and he can see the road better before him.

Presently he is out of town and following the road by the ghostly white fields. On both sides of the road are lines of trees, poplar and sycamore, as there always are in this country. Now he is watching for the cross road, his line of departure. There is a frosty mist in the air. Visibility is poor.

He finds the cross road. It is 0803.

"Crossed line one," he says, and a voice answers: "Roger."

He continues on, slowly. It will be a gray, cold, miserable day. The mist is falling on the fields, freezing on the ground. It is turning the trees of the blackwoods to his south a perfect white.

By 0850 he has moved 800 yards. Passed phase line two.

At 0913.

"Heavy enemy artillery fire," he says. "Heavy enemy artillery fire."

"Where is it?"

"Don't know," he says. "Can't see. Visibility poor. All I know is it's coming in."

The enemy is on the high ground to his left; they are behind him now, in Rittershoffen. He is in his tank, the engine roaring hot behind him, creaking and jolting over the frozen ground. His turret hatch is closed now. He cannot see the infantry, but he can hear the high-pitched scream of the artillery, right on him; and he can see the craters suddenly appear in the frozen ground ahead of him. He can feel the lift of the tank sometimes as one hits close, and he can hear the shrapnel smash angrily at the armor sides.

He is headed northeast, directly toward Hatten. He is within anti-tank gun range, but he cannot see any anti-tank guns. He can make out the houses in Hatten, the slanted roofs white from mist -- a small farming village lying on the slope above him.

At 0930.

Capt. Persky is on the air.

"Can't contact Sprague," he says. "I've lost two tanks out of his platoon." Later it turns out to be three, and fourteen men.

Lt. Francis E. Marshall of Mt. Pleasant, Pennsylvania, Company A, is dispatched to go into town to assist the infantry. He goes east, then north. All this while the bitter fighting is going on. By now it is plain where the anti-tank guns are firing from: from the south edge of Hatten, and from much farther east, so that when Marshall turns north these anti-tank guns are on his right flank.

The American artillery is not quiet. As Marshall reports the locations of the guns, battalion after battalion sends out its roaring volleys from far back. Marshall can see the bursts of their hits. Again and again it seems the guns are knocked out; but either the Germans send up new crews, or they send up new guns, for presently the anti-tank guns start firing again.

And all along to the east the burp guns are firing on the infantry; and the Kraut artillery comes in again and again; and the mortars fall almost without stopping; and men are hit, and men are blown apart, and men lie on the frozen ground in helpless fear and hear the mortars coming. And half laugh when they miss.

So it is not enough to say that Lt. Marshall got three of his tanks into the western edge of Hatten, that he went too far east and had to come back, that he took up a firing position.

It took him all afternoon. And all afternoon there was fighting; and all day there was dying; and it is not possible to tell everything that happened. There was a battalion of infantry in there, to mention just one unit; and each of the men of that battalion could tell you his own story -- and a different one -- and each man was afraid in his own way, and brave in his own way, or cowardly in his own way.

Lt. Marshall got to the west edge of the town with three tanks and took up firing positions.

Meanwhile, the rest of Company A, two platoons of medium tanks, had gotten to Hatten, one to the west, and one to the south, to help out the infantry in the west end of town. The infantry had decided they could hold the town, and the tanks had gone back and brought up more infantry on the back decks.

Three tanks were left in town for the night, and six had been knocked out.

The first night in bloody Hatten had begun.

The second day came the order: "The attack will be continued. The infantry in the west end of town will drive to the east and clear the enemy from the town. The tanks will support."

There were the Kraut paratroopers, and the panzers; the SS and the infantry; and there were the mortars and the artillery, with the observers on the hills.

Then began the bloody day battle in the town.

The American artillery laid down preparation, an endless thundering madhouse of shells landing in Hatten. And the American infantry came out.

They tried to fight their way in the smoking, smoldering rubble; and the minute they appeared the German artillery came in. The German mortars lobbed into the streets; and the German burp guns opened up. In the bitter cold they tried to run and come to grips; and the guns cut the streets and the mortars exploded.

A German tank would move up a wreck-strewn street, climbing over the piles of rock and timbers; and an American tank would move to meet it. The German tank would stop just short of a curve and the American tank would wait, just around the corner. And so they would sit. They would try to move to get a shot without being hit -- blow holes with HE through the walls of houses to fire through. And then the other would maneuver out of the way.

The two armies ground against each other.

The platoon commanders would wait for a barrage to end, duck out of their tanks, run to the infantry C.P. in the cellar of a building. Lt. Charles B. Wallace of Cincinnati, Ohio, would run with the others.

Lieutenant," the infantry commander would say, "move your tank up here, and fire on this house. Germans in there holding us up."

And Lt. Wallace would run back to his tank.

"Move up," he would say to his driver, and he would move into a position to fire. The German bazookas would open up, and the artillery start to fire again; and Wallace would fire into the house and move back from the bazookas. And the Germans in the next house would hold up the advance.

But the Germans could not move either. And the dead piled up in the streets. The dead in gray, and the dead in khaki. And the civilians, caught in the town by the fighting, killed when they tried to run down the streets.

The most vicious German counterattack came that night, just at dusk. First -- as always -- the artillery. Then the quick gray shapes of the men running; and the infantry called for artillery and the machine-guns chattered endlessly through the night. The flames of the guns streaked till the town was a living hell; and then the artillery began to land.

You could hear the shouts and the screams through the gun fire; and the screams of women trapped in the cellar of a burning house, set afire by white phosphorous.

Up to the town in the day had come a platoon of Company A, led by Lt. Sol Rael of Brooklyn, New York, and Rael had gone back. Now into this inferno, at the worst time of night, came Company C tanks, led by Capt. Persky, and you could hear his voice over the radio.

"Can't see anything. Can't see anything," he said. "Smoke is too bad. Smoke is too bad." Then, as he got through the smoke and into the fire: "Christ, there are millions of them up here. They're everywhere, they're all over the place -- Johnny, John, there's one now, get him, get him.....!" And his voice went off into abrupt silence.

Three C Company tanks were knocked out.

The German infantry did not get through. The counterattacks had been stopped. The infantry settled down to stopping the minor counterattacks that came all night to test us; and the tanks stayed to help them.

Earlier, supplies had been taken up by half-tracks, mortar half-tracks under the command of Lt. Willis E. Harding of Lincoln, Nebraska. But now the mortars were firing all day and doing guard all night; and it was too dangerous for half-tracks anyway.

Capt. Robert C. Potts of Columbia, Ohio, sent up his supplies by light tanks.

The battalion medics -- 18 men and two officers to care for 700 odd men -- went onto the battlefield in peeps to carry out the wounded, and the peeps came back with bullet holes in the windshields; and the wounded came back in half-tracks and on tanks to the Aid Station where Capt. William R. Eaton of Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, was working.

The morning of January 15, the objective was a limited attack. We were being hurt, but so was the Kraut. We were losing tanks and men; but so was he. A prisoner of war stated that more than a hundred men in his unit were killed in a single day.

The tenseness and the fighting went on. The artillery still came in its endless scream and whoomp! And the small arms chattered endlessly; and the Krauts were in the next houses.

You would be on one side of a wall and the Krauts on the other; and you would try to lob hand grenades over to get them; and the infantry would set up a mortar and take off all the increments except one and try to lob shells over one house and onto the next. And the dead lying in the streets began to get on your nerves; and the tenseness of always looking down the sights, always waiting; and the artillery was always coming and you knew it was only a question of time before one landed on the house you were in. The fighting had reached such a vicious pitch that they tried to range in eight-inch howitzers on a single house, which is something like trying to hit a fly with a shotgun.

The fighting went on and on. That day and the next day and the next day and the next day and the next day and the next.

"Counterattacks in the Hatten area were beaten off today," was the way the news dispatches read. But that did not tell of the artillery fire, and what a counterattack was. That did not tell you of the infantry staff sergeant (best damned platoon leader in the Army) in combat for months, scheduled to get to the rear at 1930 to take a physical to become a second lieutenant, and how he was killed at 1530. That did not tell you of the death and screaming, the sweating in that ice cold air and the suffering.

It did not tell of the hours on hours of endless waiting while nothing happened -- hours two hundred minutes long, and days and nights two hundred hours, waiting, waiting, till finally you wanted something to happen.

These men could tell you -- or let the official words of their citations tell you:

"Sgt. William T. Summers of Schenectady, New York, Company C, on the 18th of January at Hatten, France, at about 1400 was maneuvering his tank to get out of range of an anti-tank gun. While so engaged he saw a light tank get hit and start to burn. Summers at once went to the light tank's aid. Upon arriving he dismounted and helped evacuate the crew. The driver of the burning tank was hurt and needed first aid. Summers gave him the necessary treatment, mounted the wounded men on the back deck of his tank and rode away with him. During this entire time Sgt. Summers was entirely exposed to small arms and mortar fire falling in heavy concentrations."

"On the night of the 13th of January at Hatten, France, platoon leader, Lieutenant _____ was wounded. S/Sgt. Pennington P. Smith of Shreveport, Louisiana, and Pfc. James Barbera of Brooklyn, New York, both of Company A, dismounted from their tank into intense enemy fire and shielded the body of the Lieutenant with their own bodies while S/Sgt. Smith administered first aid. When it was necessary for someone to ride the rear deck of the tank to give the officer protection and keep him from falling off, Pfc. Barbera volunteered. Pfc. Barbera not only kept up the first aid necessary on the trip, but shielded the officer with his own body against intense small arms, mortar, and artillery fire; and the Lieutenant was successfully evacuated. S/Sgt. Smith returned to his platoon and assumed command, reorganized it and made a personal foot reconnaissance to discover the best route for his tanks. In the course of this reconnaissance he directed the evacuation of an infantry platoon sergeant. All this was accomplished under intense small arms and mortar fire. The success of the mission was largely due to the cool leadership of S/Sgt. Smith."

"On the 17th of January, at Hatten, France, Tec 4 John Pitcher of Altoona, Pennsylvania, and Pfc. Richard L. Duvall of McBain, Michigan, both of Company D, were members of the crew of a light tank that was hit by an 88 mm gun. The tank burst into flames. Under small arms fire, Tec 4 Pitcher and Pfc. Duvall had dismounted from the flaming vehicle. When they saw their other two members of the crew did not come out, the two men returned to the

tank and pulled the wounded gunner, who was aflame, from the tank. Pfc. Lowell rolled the burning body on the ground and laid on the blazing cloth to extinguish the flames. They could not evacuate the fourth man. Successful in putting out the fire, the men hailed a passing medium tank and placed the gunner on the rear deck and then laid with him under small arms fire until the safety of an aid station was reached. The gunner had a fifty-fifty chance to live as a result of their action. These men showed unusual courage in the face of great personal danger in helping their comrades in arms."

These are the stories of three men. But they are not enough. Lt. Earl A. Allgrim of Buffalo, New York, and S/Sgt. William R. Fadden of San Leandro, California, both of Headquarters Company, could tell you how they went out onto the battlefield under artillery and small arms fire to evacuate a tank.

Sgt. Stephen B. Ratchuck Jr., of Buffalo, New York, and Tec 4 Edgar M[illegible], of Utica, New York, both of Company B, could tell you how they walked on foot through artillery fire again and again to fix tank radios.

Lt. Eugene W. Marsack of Grosspoint, Michigan, and Pvt. Henry J. Ericksen of Brooklyn, New York, both of Company D, could tell you now, on the night of the 17th of January, the Krauts hit a half-track loaded with wounded men, and how they dismounted from their tank in all that fire and hitched the half-track to the tank and towed it to safety.

Those are the stories of six more men. But the story is not told. There are a thousand stories. A story for every man. And some of the men are living. And many of them are dead. And perhaps not even all those stories would tell the story of Hatten.

The battle went on.

That day and the next day and the next day and the next day and the next.

Company B came up from Drusenheim, short of tanks from its last fight, Capt. Thomas C. Beaty of Wichita Falls, Texas, in command. This was on the 15th; and that night Lt. John L. Perkins of Amsterdam, New York, was killed outside his tank at Hatten. We found a letter he had written to his wife, in pencil, and not mailed. So we stamped it and sent it out.

Lt. Cullis V. Sears of Lumber City, Georgia, went up into that town that night.

By the 17th, Company A was sent back to Durrenbach. Capt. Tharpe [illegible] wounded; and Lt. Rael was back in the hospital. Company B, low on tanks to start, had lost Lt. Perkins.

Company C was low on tanks. Capt. Persky, wounded; Lt. Hilbert C. Jones of Elcho, Wisconsin, wounded. Lt. Sprague, missing. Lt. Sidney Nack of Brooklyn, New York, wounded. Company C had one officer left.

The Germans were still held in Hatten, though.

If you went up to the gentle rolling field south of Hatten, you could see the burned out hulls of American tanks scattered there. You could see the German tanks there, too; and if you wanted to fight your way into the streets of Hatten, you could see more burned out wrecks there. American -- and German.

The Seventh Army decided to pull back. It was only a short distance, but the papers told how the Seventh Army had out-foxed von Rundstedt; how it had fought and fought and fought his counterattacks until the very last second; and then when he put all his weight behind his final punch -- the Seventh had pulled back, and he was swinging at air, and the Seventh was waiting for him again as he stumbled off his balance.

We moved back, to the south and the west, and left Hatten behind us. We moved out in the night, and the tanks stayed to cover the infantry; and the line of the battalion -- not as long, now crawled slowly down the black roads.

Behind was Hatten, and behind was the fighting. Behind were the endless artillery barrages and the waiting. Behind were the fires and the dead. Behind was the broken German offensive.

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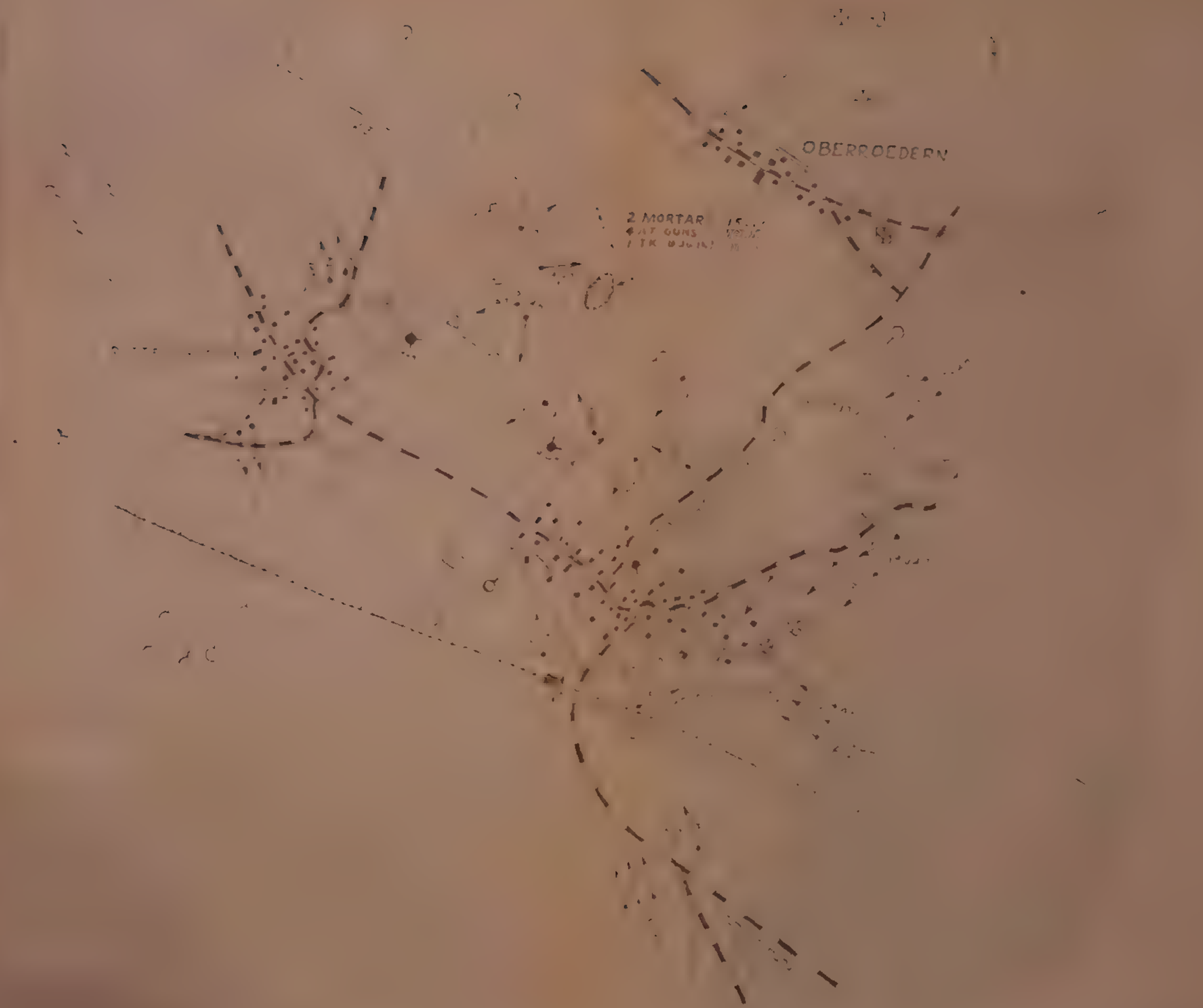
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RITTERSHOFFEN

HATTEN

"At Hatten and Rittershoffen, the 14th Armored Division fought one of the greatest defensive battles of the war."

Jacob L. Devers
general U.S Army

COLONEL MAURICE K KURTZ.

WASSERBURG, GERMANY
12 JULY, 1945

[illegible]

[illegible] DIVISION ARTILLERY

15 February 1945

: Brochure "Field Artillery in the Battle of Kittanning and Metzen."

: Commanding General, 14th Armored Division.

. The enclosed brochure entitled "Field Artillery [illegible] by Headquarters, 14th Armored Division Artillery, [illegible] to show graphically and in writing, the [illegible] the data to the 26th of January. The brochure [illegible] a short day by day history of the major elements [illegible] were actually engaged in these battles during [illegible] concerned, and the history is supplemented by [illegible] information and the resultant daily [illegible] of the plans for attack of Seventy [illegible] Division on 11 and 12 Jan, (b) [illegible] [illegible] of telephone communications, [illegible] firing fields of observation, etc. [illegible] the 14th Armored Division Artillery, [illegible] covered by artillery and the [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

4. This document has not only been compiled to portray the very active part artillery played in the battles of Patten and Ettersdorf en, but also to express the Artillery's heartfelt admiration for the splendid work of each and every infantry man

[illegible]

[illegible] spirit of cooperation and understanding that exists between all arms of this division may continue and, if possible, increase during the days to come.

For the Commanding Officer:

Carl C. N[illegible]
CARL C. N[illegible]LY,
Lt. Col., F.A.,
Executive Officer.

F I E L D A R T I L L E R Y S U P

HATTEN - RITTERSHOFFEN

Maps.

History of Battle.

Charts - CCA Plan of Attack.
- Division Plan of Attack.

Chart - Liaison and FO Location, Observation and Dead Space.

Traffic Diagram.

Capabilities.

Artillery Coverage - Daily and Composit.

Fire Schedule - Ammunition Expended.

Summary and Type of Missions - 14th Armoured Arty.

TROOP LIST

American Forces engaged in the Hatten-Rittershoffen Battle on the 19th and 20th of January 1945 were as follows:

Air Forces:

12th Tactical Air

44th Infantry Division:

1st Bn, 244th Infantry
2d Bn, 242d Infantry

79th Infantry Division:

313th Infantry Regiment
310th Field Artillery Battalion
311th Field Artillery Battalion
312th Field Artillery Battalion (155mm How)

14th Armored Division:

94th Reconnaissance Squadron
19th Armored Infantry Battalion
62d Armored Infantry Battalion
68th Armored Infantry Battalion
25th Tank Battalion
47th Tank Battalion
48th Tank Battalion
14th Armored Engineer Battalion
49th Armored Field Artillery Battalion
500th Armored Field Artillery Battalion
Hq, Combat Command; A and B and Reserve
Hq, 14th Armored Division Artillery

63th Field Artillery Group:

63th Field Artillery Battalion
14th Field Artillery Battalion
664th Field Artillery Battalion
[illegible]th Field Artillery Battalion

17th Field Artillery Group:

377th Field Artillery Battalion + reinforcements on occasions

TROOP LIST

American Forces engaged in the Hatten-Rittershoffen Battle on the 5th and 20th of January 1945 were as follows:

Air Forces:

1.th Tactical Air

[illegible] Infantry Division:

1st Bn, [illegible]d Infantry
2d Bn, [illegible]d Infantry

79th Infantry Division:

313th Infantry Regiment
310th Field Artillery Battalion
311th Field Artillery Battalion
312th Field Artillery Battalion (105mm How)

14th Armored Division:

94th Reconnaissance Squadron
19th Armored Infantry Battalion
62d Armored Infantry Battalion
68th Armored Infantry Battalion
25th Tank Battalion
47th Tank Battalion
48th Tank Battalion
125th Armored Engineer Battalion
499th Armored Field Artillery Battalion
500th Armored Field Artillery Battalion
Hq, Combat Command; A and B and Reserve
Hq, 14th Armored Division Artillery

[illegible] Field Artillery Group:

36th Field Artillery Battalion
134th Field Artillery Battalion
634th Field Artillery Battalion
698th Field Artillery Battalion

[illegible] Field Artillery Group:

[illegible]7th Field Artillery Battalion [illegible]

HEADQUARTERS
14TH ARMORED DIVISION ARTILLERY
APO 446

[illegible] February 1945

CSD Memo of May 7, 1952
[illegible]

FIELD ARTILLERY IN THE BATTLES OF RITTERSHOFFEN AND HATTEN

[illegible]:

Early January 1945 found the 79th Infantry Division, reinforced by elements of the 42nd Infantry Division, holding defensive positions generally along the old Maginot line from [illegible] ([illegible]), [illegible], [illegible], [illegible], [illegible] ([illegible]), then generally along a line to the [illegible] bank of the Rhine River. The Division sector on the northern portion of the front [illegible]. Defensive positions were sited behind rivers and had [illegible] fields of fire. The sector of the front between Hatten and Forstfeld ran thru the Haguenau Forest in very flat, heavily wooded country. Little or no observation was possible in the forest areas. SW of Forstfeld, the line ran thru low, level country, interspersed with small patches of timber. All defenses E of the Haguenau Forest were dominated by observation from the high ground E of the Rhine River. The road net in the Division sector converged in general at three places; [illegible] ([illegible]), Haguenau ([illegible]), and [illegible] ([illegible]). The Haguenau Forest [illegible] of communication between the troops on its NE side and those on its S. The towns of Hatten and Rittershoffen lay on the E slope of a ridge between the E edge of the Haguenau Forest and the [illegible] River. The Haguenau Forest proper, [illegible] to the

[illegible] to the Seltzbach River, and approximately [illegible] yds E of [illegible]. The town, [illegible] the [illegible] of Hatten and S of the [illegible] River, offered no considerable [illegible] obstacles in Scouting [illegible], was [illegible]. A stream flowing E from Rittershoffen, thru [illegible], and [illegible] the [illegible] Road, formed a [illegible] defilade from all observation N and N of Rittershoffen. This [illegible] played an important part in the battles of Hatten and Rittershoffen in that it afforded a covered road route for movement of [illegible] troops. The high ground in the vicinity of [illegible] (R1436), [illegible] observation of approach to the N or W from Hatten, and thus the [illegible] partial certain failure in the [illegible] drive. In order to make a detailed study of the artillery action in the vicinity of Hatten and Rittershoffen, a good area square with the lower left coordinate 1436, on the [illegible] map [illegible] was selected.

Weather:

The weather during the period was [illegible]. Numerous showers occurred, which [illegible], [illegible], and fog. During the period [illegible], [illegible] and frequently hampered by an almost impenetrable [illegible] of visibility. Snow on the roads made movement of [illegible] extremely difficult. Weather also prevented [illegible], [illegible], [illegible], but was nearly the [illegible] period, the [illegible] was frequently [illegible] being stuck.

Effect of the Terrain:

Large concrete pillboxes located just to the E, N, and W of Hatten, were designed to be invulnerable to artillery fire,

including heavy concrete and earth protection for machine guns. Smaller Regimental Line fortifications existed at the southern exit of Rittem, at the E end of a [illegible] road 200 yds S from the S entrance to Rittem, and at a [illegible] approx. 1500 yds SE of Rittem. These fortifications were the typical small machine gun and AT gun emplacements. These fortifications were overrun by the Germans during the course of the battle and were used as shelters for personnel, material, and AT gun locations. They proved very difficult to neutralize. The larger fortifications remained in use even though repeatedly shelled by 8" and 240mm howz.

Events Prior to 9 January 1945

In early January 1945, it became known that the 21st Panzer Division had moved to the vicinity of Wasserbourg. Elements of this division had passed the front of the 75th Infantry Division and had made a small scale attack on the front of the 313th Infantry in of Gerdemann (3029), on the 6th of January. CCA of the 14th Armored Division, consisting of the 47th Tank Bn, the 64th AIB, 90th AFA Bn, the elements of Reconnaissance (E Troop 94th), Engineers, Signal, and Medical Troops, was moved to the vicinity of Lorentz (3003A), where it was attached to Task Force Dahl of the 9th Infantry Division. It was given the mission of repulsing any German armored attack from the N, with special emphasis to attack on the Bleialb-Schwarzenberg, Dahlheim, Gilzem road. The 47th Tank Bn placed one company in the vicinity of Lentz attached to 64th AIB, one with the Reconnaissance Troop and the remainder in Gerdemann. The 90th AFA Bn occupied positions

in the vicinity of [illegible] ([illegible]), [illegible] the mission of reinforcing the fires of the 79th Division Artillery and of being prepared to support CC"A" if committed.

The [illegible] Infantry, a part of the [illegible], [illegible] the portion of the line S of Seltzbach River and E of [illegible]. This unit was lightly reinforced by TD's (about) and held the [illegible] on [illegible] terrain N of the [illegible] Forest. The [illegible] attacks continued from day today by the Germans, had developed a weakness in this sector which covered the most direct, and least-defensible route to the high ground in the vicinity of [illegible]. The [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] postitions on the high ground vicinity of Leiterswiller, and [illegible] [illegible]

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

9 January 1945:

[illegible]

242nd Infantry was ordered into Hatten with a mission of [illegible]. During the night of 9 - 10 January 1945, enemy forces were active and infiltrated into and around the town of Hatten. At 1100, A-48 moved into an assembly position just W of Rittershoffen. At 1215, A-48 received orders to return to Kuhlendorf, arriving there about 1245. At 1330, A-48 received orders to move immediately to Rittershoffen to repel a German tank attack sweeping towards Rittershoffen from Hatten, N of the RR. The remainder of the 48th Tank Bn moved to an assembly area in Niederbetschdorf. The Bn closed in the assembly area in approximately [illegible]. [illegible] Rittershoffen just in time to place a platoon N of Rittershoffen, S of the Rittershoffen-Hatten Rd, one platoon [illegible] Rd and one platoon [illegible] of Rittershoffen. The platoon (1-A-48), N and S of Rittershoffen allowed the German tanks to come within 400 yds S of their position where [illegible] per platoon [illegible] cut in a half-hour period 8 German tanks, and 1 self-propelled gun. The Germans had also attempted to [illegible] from the direction of the village of [illegible] but upon detection of the attack on the N, turned around and fled to the E of Hatten. This action had concluded by 1430. At 1500, A-48 attached to restore the 242nd Inf, was placed in the E and [illegible] of the N, in anticipation of an attack launched by a Bn of the 242nd Infantry. C-48 [illegible] in a position E of Rittershoffen to support A-48. [illegible] positions by 1600 on both N and S of Hatten. [illegible] all vehicles of supported Inf units. The Bn of the 242nd Infantry spent two days only for rest. A-48 was relieved by two platoons of the 827th TD Bn at 0200 10 January 1945, "B" and "C" Companies, the [illegible].

moved into Hatten around 0100 10 January 1945 in the western 200 yds of town.

[illegible] fire was placed on routes of approach from SE towards Hatten, on enemy troops and on hostile positions in the center of Hatten. The 2nd Bn 242nd Infantry failed to clear the town [illegible] during the night. At night, friendly Infantry held the SW portion of Hatten, and two platoons of "A" Co 45th Tk Bn outposted the NW and SE edges of Hatten.

[illegible]

[illegible] Rittershoffen area of 3rd Bn 315th Infantry. At 0900, A-48 and F-315 started to attack S around Hatten to restore the MLR, but a German tank and Infantry attack that jumped off at 0900 around the N end of Hatten forced A-48 back to the S of [illegible] was regained [illegible] by 1200. [illegible] Bn of 315th Infantry was to attack, clear Hatten, and restore [illegible]. [illegible] to attack towards Hatten from the S, generally along the RR, then N on the E edge of Hatten. "C" Co to attack NE, S of [illegible] Rittershoffen.

During the night, German forces had infiltrated [illegible] placing AT guns and heavy tanks in concealed positions in [illegible]

the 2nd Bn 315th Infantry went into the western portion of [illegible] ing from guns emplaced in buildings or near buildings in Hatten, [illegible] in the afternoon, [illegible] relief of elements of the 242nd Infantry remaining in Hatten was ordered for the night of the 10th and 11th. At dark, the tank Bn reorganized on the high ground W of Rittershoffen.

The two platoons of tanks which had been outposting the NE portion of Hatten on the night of 9 - 10 was relieved by 3 TD's manned by colored troops, and the two platoons were withdrawn at about 0300 to Rittershoffen. During the morning, at 0650, the CO of the North TD platoon was killed and the TD's withdrew their outposts into the town, joining elements of the 315th Infantry, where they were employed as armored pillboxes throughout the remainder of the action. After the withdrawal of "B" and "C" of the 48th from the attack on Hatten, C-48 was left E of Rittershoffen with 3rd Bn 315th to defend Rittershoffen.

On this date, Rittershoffen was lightly defended by elements of the 315th Infantry, the bulk of the defending troops being in the town. During the night of 10 - 11 January, German forces infiltrating by covered routes, using the northern street of Hatten and draw leading W into [illegible] portions of Rittershoffen, getting in rear of "C" Co 48th Tank Bn, outposting the E approaches to Rittershoffen.

The artillery action on this date as well as on the 9th was directed largely towards hostile routes of approach, and

troop concentrations. The action during the day was largely of a piece-meal nature, and was not well coordinated with the artillery effort.

11 January 1945

At approximately 0630, "C" Co of the 48th Tank Bn, on outpost, was attacked by a Co of German tanks and what was estimated to be about 200 Infantry, supported by heavy artillery concentrations. This attack succeeded in driving the infantry and tanks to the western side of Rittershoffen. By 0730, "C" Co 48th Tank Bn lost 12 sed tanks.

Early morning of the 11th found the 3rd Bn 315th Inf placed down in the SW portion of Rittershoffen, the 2nd Bn of the 315th Infantry with some survivors of the 2nd occupying the eastern portion of Batten. The enemy had succeeded in reinforcing his troops and bringing into the area a considerable number of AT guns which were skillfully emplaced during the night.

It was decided to commit CC"A" as a unit in an attack to start at 1545 with a mission as follows: "Task AIB (-), plus "A" Co 48th Tank Bn, will attack E from Rittershoffen, and capture the NE end of Rittershoffen, push E and capture the W side of Batten, then occupy the NER E of Batten. The 48th Tank Bn (-), plus a Co of 66th AIB, will attack to E, capture G and the town of Rittershoffen, and push on to E, South of the Rittershoffen-Batten Rd, assist the 66th and 315th Inf in the capture of Batten, and occupy NER. Time of attack on Batten to be coordinated with 315th Inf."

The 66th Inf (reinforced), attached at 1545, and [illegible] very heavy artillery, mortar, and S/A fire and

by darkness had reached a line approximately 500 yds NW of Rittershoffen, where they dug in for the night.

At 1615, the 45th launched a tank attack which made little progress in the face of strong enemy AT fire coming from the woods and the cemetery in the SE part of Rittershoffen.

At 1100, Division Artillery Commander, 14th Armored Division, was given instructions by VI Corps Artillery Commander to move the 628th and 691st AFA to the vicinity of Seltz (R0938), with a mission of reinforcing the fires of the 79th Infantry Division and to support C/A's by the 14th Armored Division either to the N or E. Early in the afternoon, the Division Artillery CP was established in Schweighouse (R0937), and the 479th AFA Bn in Seltz. The projected move for the 691st AFA Bn was cancelled, and this Bn was attached to the 45th Infantry Division where it was urgently needed to support action in the vicinity of Kapsweiller (R0937). This attachment became effective at 1400. The 479th AFA Bn completed displacement from the Schweighouse Lor - Seltz area (R0937), to positions just S and E of Seltz, closing in the new area at 2000. Division of 479th was "reinforcing fires of 628th FA Bn." The remainder of the 14th Armored Division moved on the afternoon and the night of the 14th to assembly area in the Seltz-Schweighouse area.

<u>24 January 1945</u>:

At 0430, Comd" of the 14th Armored Division, consisting of 19th Tank Bn, 62nd AIB, plus attachments of Engineers and Medical troops, was ordered to attack positions in vicinity of

Schweiller (R1237), with mission of attacking in order in column of Bns. The leading Bn was to seize Rattenz the second Bn to cut the Rd E of Rattenz and restore the MLR, remaining therein until relieved by elements of the 76th Division. At the same time, CCB" of the 14th Armored Division, consisting of 47th Tank Bn (-3 Co), two 19th AIB, 94th Rcn Sq (-Co A & C), was moving to assembly area in vicinity of Spalenbach (R0639), with mission of reinforcing CCB", or of attacking on short notice.

14th Armored Division Artillery assumed control of the 47th and 90th AFA Bns and completed its wire communication system to support any projected attack. During the day, the 66th AIB, and the 3rd Bn 315th Infantry succeeded in clearing the W part of Rittershoffen. The fighting was bitter, involving house to house fighting under intense artillery and S/A fire. Tank attacks to clear the SE edge of town were ineffective.

CCB", attacking at 1130 advanced elements of 25th Tank Bn and 62nd Infantry across the open ground S of the Saltzbach River to a position generally N of the W edge of Rittern. They were, however, unable to occupy the ridge N of town, and after the loss of 5 tanks, withdrew to their original L/D, on the Rittershoffen-Leiterswiller Rd. The enemy, well dug in, supplied with numerous weapons, and supported by what was estimated to be approximately 1500 pds of artillery fire, succeeded in maintaining his position along the ridge N of Rittern.

At 1200, the Commanding General, 14th Armored Division, issued orders for a coordinated attack for the 12th of January. In substance, this order was as follows:

"a. CC"A" to continue the attack at daylight 13 Jan 45, clear Rittershoffen, after clearing town, assist CC"B", reestablish VI Corps line, hold and until relieved by 79th Division.

b. CC"B" attack the N edge of Rittershoffen and Batten by fire, using all available tank and assault guns. Attack at daylight, coordinating fires with movements of CC"A" and CC"R"; protect Division left, North, flank.

c. CC"R" assemble in vicinity Kesselhut (R1333), prior to daylight. Under cover of friendly smoke screen, seize Batten, reestablish Corps MLR, hold and until relieved by 79th Division; protect right, South, flank of the Division.

d. 94th Reg Sq less detachments, establish Reg screen along the general line Scultbach-Batten (R1534)

e. Division Artillery general support."

At this stage in the operation in the vicinity of Batten, a peculiar intermingling of troops occurred. Elements of 36 Armd Infantry, 315th Infantry, tanks and TD's were in town. Elements of the 36 and 3rd Inf and 315th Inf were being supported by FA belonging to the 79th Division. The 14th Armored Division was being committed as a unit. Artillery support being provided by the 94th and 444th AFA Bns. Corps artillery support was being provided by the 6th FA Group and

the 17th FA Group. Fires in certain areas, especially those along the front of the 31st Infantry in Ritterstaffen were to be cleared through the 7th Divisional Artillery. Fires in front of elements of the 14th Armored Division were to be cleared through 14th Armored Division. This intermingling of troops called for the utmost cooperation and closest type of coordination in preparing fire plans.

Hostile observation in Altdorf, Bulz, and Grossdorfel, and Hill 180 (Rittersteffen), dominated the battlefield.

The fire plan for the days attack envisioned the use of [illegible] in the close support of troops engaged in battle. A preparation fire of 30 min was to be fired by med and heavy artillery on known hostile positions in the vicinity of Rodenhausen, Grossdorf, Klein-Crosbach, Oberschaeff, Glasberg, and Ingolsheim. Interdiction fire was arranged for on Gelnbach, a town on the enemy's main supply route. The zero was set at 0800 10 Jan.

The night was foggy and dark, the roads covered with ice, and movements to the attack positions were accomplished slowly and difficult maintenance.

10 January 1945

Early morning of the 10th revealed a heavy ground fog. Visibility was zero to one hundred and visibility in which varied from 100 to 300 yards. Due to this atmospheric condition, the zero was delayed from 0800 to 0900 for GSR and 1000 for GSRB.

The attack by GSRA" jumped off at 1000 under cover of intense friendly artillery fire placed on the [illegible] portion of

Rittershoffen. The 3rd Bn of the 315th and 45th Tank Bn were able to completely occupy several more houses in the S part of town just E of the church in Rittershoffen. The 45th Tank Bn moved 7 medium tanks and 5 light tanks into a position E of the RR and between Rittershoffen-Hatten Rd E of Rittershoffen. CCR attacked at 0600A across the open ground between the Engenwald Forest and Rittershoffen under the cover of friendly smoke screen, and by midday, reconnoitered north with elements of Infant and light Infantry which were cut off in Hatten. The tank attack generally along the RR south Hatten was able to reach the south part of town about noon. The 14th Infantry failed to reach town, however, the attack was reorganized in the afternoon and in an attack directly into the E part of town, the 14th Tank Bn cleared the town of the Germans by dark while a mixed column was able to the South. Heavy artillery concentrations along the eastern of Hatten effectively silenced hostile weapons and made it possible for tanks to enter the main N-S street from the S. Shell [illegible] in the town [illegible], made the road impassable, and after the loss of 2 tanks from enemy fire, the 14th Tank Bn [illegible] the 3rd Bn 14th Inf. The 3rd Bn trail entered the town and the tanks moved into the town by trail. This action cleared the enemy from the northern center of Hatten, and left the enemy in control only of the NE portion of the town.

Although other [illegible] attempts to attack by fire with

The lack of progress of the forces attacking in Hatten-[illegible] caused elements of 3CD to be committed in an attack on Hatten Sta. Kn. K. Three separate attempts were made to reach Hatten, the deepest penetration being made in the vicinity of [illegible]147. Elements of 3CD were forced to withdraw in each case by heavy AT gun fire, and intense S/A, artillery, and mortar fire.

At 1340, enemy reinforcements were found moving towards Hatten on the Hatt-Hatten Rd. The 3lth Pz Gr (and) took the bridge at [illegible] under fire, but was unable to destroy the bridge due to poor visibility. During the day, the Air Force took advantage of clearing weather conditions and made an attempt to drop supplies to the 3lgth Infantry surrounded in Hatten.

At 1550, the 47th AFA in [illegible] the location of the town of Hatt, using red smoke in order to guide dive bombers in a strafing mission on the town.

At 2115, enemy troops launched a very powerful S/A, using armor, flame throwers carried on tanks, and infantry. This attack forced our tanks towards Hatt-Hatten position on the Hatt-Hatten road and regained the E edge of Hatten, and approximately half of the W edge of Hatten.

At 2325, the enemy made a second S/A on Hatt-Hatten, using similar equipment. This attack was effectively broken up by artillery fire, but our infantry were driven from town before the attack was stopped.

14 January 1945

The early morning hours of the 14th in Hatten were

characterized by lack of hostile activity. Clearing air conditions brought an increase in the number of observed missions. At approximately 1400, a very heavy enemy attack launched from the N and E portions of Rittershoffen was stopped by artillery fire, and the fighting in Rittershoffen reverted to the use of demolition squads, flame throwers, and tommies, in an effort to win a house at a time from the enemy. Our observers had one of their best days during the operations. One observer discovered and destroyed a gun position which was camouflaged to represent a manure pile. 3" gun were adjusted on a large Russian line pillbox at 1500)365, and after 15 rds succeeded in destroying it. Numerous enemy targets consisting of small groups of infantry were fired upon during the day.

At 2000, an attempt by the enemy to attack Batten from the E was broken up by artillery fire.

At 2300, a very determined attack on the N portion of Batten was likewise stopped by artillery fire. However, enemy succeeded in gaining control of the buildings on the N side of the road in Batten, forcing our troops to withdraw from that portion of the town. The fighting on this date, in both Batten and Rittershoffen was at very close quarters, and on numerous occasions, heavy defensive artillery fires were placed on enemy troops in buildings just across the street from our own troops. It will be noted from the sketch showing the concentration of fires on the 16th of January, that the preponderance of the fires delivered fell within the N and E edge of both Rittershoffen and Batten.

Our troops were unable to dislodge the enemy from the churches in Ritterscheffen and Batten, and the enemy made good use of the observation obtained from these positions to bring effective fire on our troops.

At 1215, the 6th FA Group ordered an M12 (155mm SP gun) to report to the CP of 6CR. This gun was placed in Batten in the afternoon by an observer of the 6th FA and moved into Ritterscheffen where it succeeded in firing 3 rds at very short range into the church. Battle fire from heavy weapons and AT guns forced the withdrawal of this piece after the 3rd rd fired, no material damage was done. Failure to make the necessary arrangements for close supporting and covering fires resulted in the failure to accomplish the mission. Friendly troops occupying buildings within 50 yds of this church refused to allow fires of heavy weapons such as 8" howitzers on the church and felt that to withdraw for fear to permit fire of heavy weapons on the church would surely result in the loss of the much ground. Some structures such as this proved to be unprofitable targets for 105mm howitzer fire. Germans found a considerable portion of both Ritterscheffen and Batten on fire. Air observers reported that burning at dark as a result of bombing. After dark, 32 rds of 105mm HE were fired into the SE portion of Batten in an attempt to burn that portion of town and prevent enemy occupation of buildings not on fire.

Lessons Learned:

At [illegible], a small C/A on [illegible], [illegible]

broken up by fire from medium artillery. At 0600, another C/A in Hatten supported by flame throwers and tanks carrying flame throwers, starting in the eastern edge of Hatten, was broken up by artillery fire.

At 0135, a small attack launched from the northern part of Hatten towards the buildings in the southern part of town was broken up by artillery fire. At 0430, the Liaison Officer with CCR requested supporting fires for an attack to be launched at 1500. These fires were worked out and the 15 min preparation was fired between 1500 and 1515. Units of artillery of the 14th Armored Division and 6th FA Group participating. This attack was made in an effort to regain ground lost during the previous day. This attack, however, failed in its purpose, as just as it was initiated, a strong German attack estimated at Bn strength was launched from the E of Hatten. The preparation fires scheduled to follow were continued as defensive fires, and no material change in positions resulted. By 1640, these fires were lifted. At 1730, enemy pressure in Hatten was again increased and buildings were being burned. Friendly see tanks moved into the town where they joined elements of CCR and a new attempt was made to advance to the E in Hatten as far as the II grid line. Again, just as this attack was launched, a heavy C/A was launched from the E. This C/A was broken up by artillery fire and no material change in troop dispositions followed.

At 1800, the artillery was advised that the situation

situation was critical and that drastic reductions must be made in [illegible] expenditures, that every effort should be made to hold expenditures below [illegible] rds per gun per day for 105mm and 180 rds per day per Bn for 155 mm. [illegible]

The evening, after dark, remained relatively quiet, the skies cleared, and Germans took advantage of bright moonlight and snow-covered ground to fire [illegible] rounds at small hostile groups found moving in the open during the night.

Light enough out of doors all night.

The first [illegible] German plane seen in this area dropped a bomb approximately 100 yds to rear of "B" Btry, causing considerable damage to [illegible].

1 January 1945

At 0115, in the morning, a request was made for an artillery observer to accompany a patrol to reconnoiter the hostile lines immediately E of Rittershoffen and at a point at 0[illegible] in a [illegible]. An OP observer was [illegible] to accompany the patrol and observed hostile positions in the northern edge of Rittershoffen until 0400, when the patrol returned. Based on the report of this observer, it was decided an attempt would be made to establish a permanent OP in the same location the next night. This patrol encountered no resistance in the main routes of approach from the E into Rittershoffen, and was considered successful from an artillery point of view. The patrol also reported that the town had received a number of [illegible] during the day and received a number of [illegible] in the morning.

troops of CCA made request for an 8" how to be ready to fire on the church in Rittershoffen and demolish it between 1200 and 1300. Arrangements were made to fulfill this request but the troops in the immediate vicinity of the church refused to permit this fire, so the mission was not accomplished.

Intermittently during the morning, enemy forces made concentrations in the central part of Hatten, evidently in attempt to screen road movement. Air OP's attempting to find out what was going on behind the smoke screen were unable to determine what the nature of the enemy activity was because of very poor observing conditions.

At 1132, the church steeple in Hatten was observed to fall, believed to have been the result of continued artillery fire in the vicinity.

At 1201, a small C/A starting in the E part of Hatten was broken up by artillery fire.

At 1245, a second request was made for infantry forces in the northern portion of Hatten.

At 1315, a platoon of tanks and a platoon of infantry were ordered to attack at 1500 to the SE and take the woods on the N end of Rittershoffen. The artillery support for this attack was worked out.

At 1445, a request was received from the Air Force to meet Bretnach with 2 rds of smoke for a landing station. This was fired by 634th FA Bn.

At 1900, the attack to seize the woods in the N end of Rittershoffen was cancelled with no ground having been gained.

In general, the day's activity was that of either [illegible] to [illegible] fighting accompanied by heavy concentrations of arty fire on close-in targets. A few [illegible] rounds were fired during the day against small groups of enemy troops and vehicles.

At 2020, heavy vehicular traffic was noted in the area of Fatten. This appeared to confirm a PW report that a relief of troops in Fatten was taking place. This harassing fire program was initiated and maintained throughout the night.

17 January 1945:

Heavy vehicular traffic on the roads N of Fatten and on the northern Rd in Fatten continued in spite of harassing fires. Several TOT's were organized and fired, apparently with good effect, as a marked decrease in vehicular traffic was noted.

At 0830, mobile tanks and Infantry were observed moving from the SE into Fatten which was being heavily shelled by German artillery. At 1030, in the morning, a Pzkw heavy mobile C/A was observed moving into the woods in the SE portion of Fatten. Artillery observers in Fatten were forced to abandon their radios and take cover in shelters for protection. At 0914, the C/A from the SE was reinforced by an attack supported by Infantry and tanks which moved from the woods N of Fatten. All available artillery was brought into action and by 1000 the C/A was apparently broken up.

At 1530, in the morning, frequently heard noises a [illegible]

screen of time fire attempted to move E along the RR and then [redacted] Hatten. This attack [redacted] [redacted], but was broken up by heavy AF fire [redacted] from SE of Hatten.

(Task force Wahl)

"A" Co from the 1st Bn 315th Infantry [redacted] attack [redacted] in the morning against the N edge of Bittendorf. This attack was not supported initially by artillery fire as the Co was not heard from until 1215 when it reported it was able to get part of its troops into the town. The platoons of this Co were found later in the day, the rest of the Co disappeared.

At 1230, CCR reported that the tanks attacking in the vicinity of KR 3 of Hatten had taken Infantry support and it was noted that they could continue on to the E, then N, and out the East-West Rd to Bral. This attack successfully [illegible] was [illegible] supported by the tanks and Infantry in Hatten in a coordinated effort to clear out the E portion of the town and regain ground lost in the East E town. It was already supported by observed fire, and it has been ascertained that at least 200 enemy were killed, and about 100 rds of the town were regained. This attack was stopped after the loss of 3 tanks at about 1430. The tanks were used in preparation of an even coordinated 200 rds N and E and 200 rds E and S in the SE portion of Hatten.

In an attempt to relieve the situation in Bittendorf, a coordinated effort was organized for 1900. This consisted of an attack from the NW by one Co against the main North-

[redacted] in Rittershoffen, in which [redacted] the [redacted] in the East Central part of Rittershoffen, and an attack to the NE from the SW portion of Rittershoffen. This attack jumped off on time and was closely supported by mortars, [redacted] artillery fire. [redacted] artillery fire [redacted] on this attack which [redacted] very complete.

Throughout the remainder of the day, the Germans [redacted] heavily. The infantry [redacted] by strong [redacted] artillery bombardments. Each [redacted] throughout the day resulted in heavy casualties on both sides. Nearly all the houses in Kaltenhausen and parts of Rittershoffen were [redacted] under heavy artillery preparations of bombardment. The Germans had great difficulty [redacted] building fire. Overall casualties were very small. However, one [redacted] of the company in Kaltenhausen [redacted] by our own as well as the enemy's artillery. No material [redacted] of the troops in Rittershoffen. The troops on both sides [redacted] a [redacted] complete lack of any activity other than harrassing

artillery fires.

[illegible] January 1945

Everything remained quiet until about [illegible] in the morning when a group of enemy tanks were located at [illegible]. These tanks were fired upon by med artillery and several [illegible] were destroyed. During the morning, visibility improved considerably, and ground observers were able to adjust heavy artillery on enemy occupied pillboxes at [illegible] and [illegible]. [illegible] direct hits with 240mm [illegible] on the [illegible] pillboxes caused smoke to come from the pillbox, but the fog closed in before the extent of the damage could be finally ascertained. In the middle of the afternoon, numerous small but profitable targets were picked up by ground observers and were fired upon with profit and good effect. About [illegible], about 12 tanks were found at [illegible] in the northern part of Rittershoffen. Fire of the 6th FA Group was adjusted on them using an AOP. It was believed that 6 of these tanks were destroyed or partly damaged. The remainder took cover in nearby buildings and woods, and were lost to view.

At [illegible], 14th Division Artillery AOP reported what appeared to be flashes from rocket guns coming from vicinity [illegible] and [illegible] artillery fire. As the first volley was fired on this position, [illegible] landed immediately in rear of "A" Btry position of the 499th AFA Bn. Other reports of rockets falling in the area confirmed the fact [illegible] was apparently a Btry of Nebelwerfers in action. Six Btry volleys were fired at the location where the flashes were seen, and no more rocket fire was received for two days. The

[illegible] rocket position area as a very large, brilliant fire was [illegible].

At about 1915, hostile tanks were heard moving in the northern portion of Hatten. These tanks were apparently [illegible] the S part of Hatten could be engaged by direct fire, as they commenced firing into the buildings occupied by our troops at about 2000 and in spite of artillery fire delivered at suspected locations, these tanks continued to harrass and annoy our troops throughout the night. At [illegible] Hatten was the best demonstration of concentrated fire power [illegible].

[illegible]

missions.

10 January 1945:

At 0030, observers from CCR, 14th Armored Division, reported increased activity in the NW portion of Hatten and reported hearing the movement of heavy equipment. They also reported that since the red artillery fire against the tanks in the northern part of town the afternoon before, "enemy armor" had been heard almost continuously, and they believed an evacuation drive had been hit. It is possible that the sound of movement of heavy equipment noted at this time was an attempt to evacuate tanks disabled [illegible] the afternoon before. The night remained generally quiet, and little activity was noted until 0755 when the enemy laid down a heavy barrage on the SW portion of Hatten and delivered a heavy attack from the N, NE, and E. All available artillery was brought into action on the N and E portions of Hatten. At 0922, CCR reported hostile fire had slackened materially, but that the situation was still tense, the enemy having gained some ground on the E. Bulk of fire was then shifted on the S and E portion of the town. At [illegible], observers with CCR in Hatten requested that the fire be moved in closer to our troops on the E and reported that 3 enemy tanks on the ridge at approximately [illegible] were firing by direct laying into Hatten. By 0940, the hostile attack was definitely broken. At 1027, an artillery FO with troops in Hatten sent the following message: "Most fire daily at [illegible], tanks and Infantry. Our troops holding S.O.I.'s". A new attack from the E had pushed our troops back at 5 to 6 houses in Hatten. At 1030, another call was received that

additional fire in the clearing between the two strongholds in the N part of Batten. Prompt delivery of this fire caught many troops in the open and caused heavy casualties. Enemy pressure continued heavy until about 1400 when the attack appeared to be completely broken. Clearing weather in the afternoon permitted several profitable observed missions on hostile infantry, but air observers were not able to operate due to high winds.

At 1610, an air support mission was fired thru one of the 8th artillery Bn which marked Blockersdorn with smoke and the town was successfully dive-bombed by our Air Force, the mission being completed at 1630. The surprise nature of the request for this fire mission prevented the laying down of AA artillery neutralization fires. The bombers received such heavy AA fire that they were unable to strafe the town after bombing it.

At 1725, the 47th reported that they had completed firing 30 rds of 8" how shells on the Bacon-Bahl bridge, and believed that they had so damaged the approaches that the bridge was unusable. Around 2000, an unusual amount of traffic was heard moving on the Bahl-Batten Rd. Some of this traffic appeared to be stopping in the vicinity of Bachant Lim pillboxes near this Rd, and some appeared to be going into Batten. This traffic continued until approximately 2400 in spite of numerous TOT's which were fired at critical points along this road.

[illegible]:

The early morning hours of the 8th were marked by

extremely active and held every patrolling throughout the [illegible] area. At 0235 in the morning, [illegible] of the [illegible] was ordered to move to locations in rear area. At 0730, [illegible] to snow and visibility was reduced nearly to 100 yds. At 1030, the snow had stopped and visibility had improved and the remainder of the morning was consumed in [illegible] observed activities on enemy strongpoints, pillboxes, and small groups of enemy observed moving on foot on the [illegible] sector. At 1400, a heavy smoke screen was built up about 200 yds E of Hotton apparently to cover some movement being made by hostile troops. Artillery fire was placed on and behind this screen and heavy retaliatory fires were received from the Germans. Snow started again in the afternoon and prevented any effective observation of artillery fire and the activity decreased rapidly during the afternoon. The day was marked as the first one in 12 days where the Germans failed to put on a sizeable attack. Our troops welcomed the opportunity to rest and improve their positions. The [illegible] of January will be remembered by all troops engaged in the Ardennes-Hotton Battle, not only because the enemy failed to attack and they were allowed to rest, but by the rapidity with which they executed a withdrawal from very close contact with the enemy without his especially discovering their departure.

The Belgian Artillery Commander, 84th General Division, at 1300, was advised that the VI Corps was moving at once to a new defensive line S of the Hotton Salient and generally

along the Roer River, that the 14th Armored Division, less the artillery, would assemble in the vicinity of Dettwiller, G6017, that he would report at once to Corps Artillery Headquarters for orders concerning movement and new positions for the artillery, and that the mission of the 14th Armored Division Artillery would be that of general support of the 79th and 102nd Infantry Divisions. One of the 14th Armored Division was to remain in position and cover the withdrawal of the 79th Division.

Since this withdrawal was to be completed by 2400 on the night of January, the Corps Artillery Commander returned to his CP and informed that the reason in Corps with the necessary parties sent ahead to have Artillery Headquarters for orders at once. At about 1200, instructions were given to Division Artillery commanders to start withdrawing the battalions to Bouxwiller, G5800, immediately and to have the AOP landing strip in the forward position near Dettwiller, G7602. A noteworthy event which happened on the afternoon of the 20th was the movement of the AOP's planes from their landing strip in the vicinity of Sparbach, (G6000) to Dettwiller (G7602) in a very heavy snow storm, with visibility of about less than 100 yds.

The 102nd DIV was withdrawn by 2400 that day by withdrawing the battalions, and preparations had commenced to move the 102nd DIV in the vicinity of Bouxwiller (G5800) without delay. The 102nd DIV was withdrawn during the night without incident. The 79th Division Artillery, which had withdrawn through the Division Artillery, which had withdrawn the battalions and placed in the new positions as ordered on the night. The 79th AFA, after supporting the withdrawal of CCA, closed in the

new position area in the vicinity of [illegible], ([illegible]) at 1315 on the 21st. These movements were made on roads cluttered with traffic, covered with ice, and heavy snow. No equipment or ammunition was abandoned or lost during this displacement.

2/15/45 -- Wiesweiler heim
[illegible]

5 [illegible] 1/ = VI corps artly
1/ = C.G. 14 A.D.
1/ = 9-3 . 14 A.D.

* * * * * * * * * * *

1/ - C.G. 14 A.D. artly
1/ - Army - 14 A.D. artly
[illegible]

Compiled by Seventh Army - February '45.
W.K.

C O N F I D E N T I A L

In an effort to help restore the W[illegible] and line of resistance, the 6th Armored Division [illegible] by Brigadier General [illegible] G. Smith, made plans to seize Hatten and Rittershoffen.*

The quality of the German troops encountered in Hatten and Rittershoffen revealed that the enemy was throwing the best it had into these two villages in a last final effort to make its counter attack a success.

The enemy had a great deal to gain if it could relieve American pressure from the Colmar Pocket and also join up with the bridgehead established across the Rhine River in the vicinity of Gerstheim. The apparent plan of the German High Command was to quickly join forces with the bridgehead forces before the Americans could regroup their forces. If actually found, this joint force would be in a position to attack through to Strasbourg. This accomplishment would have been good Heinrich Himmler's boast that German troops would be back in Strasbourg by 10 January 1945.** With the large Alsatian city in their hands, the enemy would be in a strategic position to add support to the forces concentrated in the vicinity of Colmar by Germans and French Forces.***

Many Infantry type units were committed in the battle of Hatten and Rittershoffen were (at Hatten) 3rd Battalion, 15th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, 1st Battalion, 103rd Panzer Grenadier Regiment (Panzer Lehr Division) (Rittershoffen) and the 3d Battalion 104th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, 25th of the 9th Panzer Grenadier Division. These units participated in

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* - Operations participated in, Pg. 1, 6th Army Diary, [illegible]
** - I-2, 9th Infantry Division, Major General W. Knott
*** - Ibid

C O N F I D E N T I A L

the first attack element [illegible] on 9 January 1945. On 11 January the [illegible] Panzer Engineer Battalion of the 21st Panzer Division arrived on. On 14 January the 1st and 3d Battalions of the 26th Volksgrenadier Regiment made their appearance and were followed the next day by the 2nd Battalion, 26th Volksgrenadier Regiment, all of the 7th Volksgrenadier Division. [illegible] and the [illegible] Grenadier Regiment of the 6th Volks Grenadier Division came to the front in the [illegible] (Ro [illegible]) the 3d Battalion, 26th Panzer Grenadier Regiment and the 1st Battalion 2nd Panzer Grenadier of the 21st Panzer Division engaged American forces on 16 January 1945. On the evening days the 2nd Battalion, 26th Panzer Grenadier Regiment left Bitburg to join the forces in Bitburg. On 13 January the 5th Regiment, 47th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, 116 Panzer Division appeared in Bitburg. Elements of the 26th Volks Grenadier Regiment appeared in Bitburg on 16 January. The following day the 3rd and 4th Volks Grenadier Regiment were brought up in Bitburg. Also the latest arrivals are of the 276th Volks Grenadier Division. These [illegible] were reported in operations conducted at the 5th Panzer Battalion, 3rd Tank Regiment, 21st Panzer Reconnaissance Battalion, 15th Panzer Reconnaissance Battalion, 15th Panzer Pioneer Battalion, 15th Panzer Artillery Regiment, 115th General Artillery Battalion and 310th General Headquarters Artillery Battalion.*

Martial Law was declared in Bitburg the end of the Division was on 1300 on 1 January, Company "A", 3rd Tank Battalion (Combat Command "A") was sent from Bastogne to Bitburg with the

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* 3rd Report, 7th Armored Division

[illegible] of assisting the 34th Infantry in straightening the line. An [illegible] number of enemy tanks were reported at that time to be [illegible] the [illegible] from the south, which to be [illegible] enemy personnel carriers and tanks were [illegible] into position. At approximately [illegible] one platoon ("A" - 18th Tank Battalion) went into position on the [illegible] on overlook. The platoon consisting of four medium tanks opened [illegible] tanks and took the enemy under fire. Six medium sized enemy tanks were knocked out without the loss of either American men or equipment. The remainder of all the German armor fled northward. With the position stabilized in Bitburg-Echternach, elements of the 34th Infantry and the 18th Battalion planned a coordinated attack on Echternach. The attack jumped off at 1700, January 9, with one platoon of tanks and one platoon of infantry attached to the east of either side of Echternach. The result is the formation [illegible] of Echternach not little opposition was encountered [illegible] itself on the south side of town. The attack on the north side encountered some resistance, knocked out one tank, and necessitated casualties and hardship care. The outstanding work particularly of Captain [illegible], commander of Company "A", 18th Tank Battalion has been [illegible]. I strongly feel a well deserved citation of the 34th Tank Destroyer Battalion and the 3rd and 4th Companies of the 34th Infantry is warranted. The [illegible] with [illegible] personnel in the face of heavy enemy resistance [illegible] the 34th Infantry and between part of Echternach, were taken by a [illegible] fighting itself.

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* - [illegible], 34th Tank Bn, 9 Jan 45. /s/ [illegible] Jones Jr., Captain, C.A.C.
** - [illegible]
*** - [illegible], 34th Tank Bn, [illegible] - 9 Jan 1945. /s/ [illegible] Jr., Captain, C.A.C.
**** - [illegible], 34th Infantry Division.

At [illegible] January 19, Company "A", [illegible] Tank Battalion, was given the mission of capturing the terrain on either side of the road running southeast out of Hatten. This section would have cut one of the enemy's main arteries of supply into Hatten.* Shortly after the attack jumped off, "A" Company's ([illegible] Tank Battalion) mission was changed in order to [illegible] the threat of an [illegible] enemy attack to the [illegible] of [illegible].** [illegible] attack to the [illegible], leaving a [illegible] force to [illegible] the [illegible] on the south side of Hatten.

"[illegible]" Company ([illegible] Tank Battalion) [illegible] the [illegible] Infantry [illegible] tanks.*** [illegible] tank was knocked out with one probable and [illegible]. At noon the remainder of the [illegible] Tank Battalion [illegible] approximately [illegible], [illegible] Company, [illegible] Tank Battalion was in battle position directly [illegible]

[illegible]

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* - See Map

** - [illegible] Report, [illegible] Tank Bn, [illegible] Jan 45

*** - Ibid

**** - [illegible] Report - [illegible] Tank Bn, [illegible] Jan 45

came from the [illegible] of Hatten. One tank [illegible] by German riflemen and machine gun fire was destroyed by a bazooka team from Company "F", 315th Infantry and another by tanks of "B" Company, 48th Tank Battalion.* The enemy quickly replaced their losses and hostile fire from the northwest of Hatten knocked out the leading American tank. Communications of two platoon leaders' tanks failed. Four American tanks were hit by fire from the vicinity of Hatten. At 1735 the units were ordered to withdraw from the attack.**

Meanwhile, "C" Company, 48th Tank Battalion and Infantrymen of the [illegible] Infantry Regiment attacked to the northwest of Hatten with the objective of [illegible] the high ground on either side of the road to the northwest of Hatten, thereby cutting the German's connecting link with [illegible].*** The enemy was well entrenched in this sector with tanks and AT guns. [illegible] enemy tanks were hit with AP ([illegible]) [illegible] which did not [illegible] but the extent of [illegible] damage is unknown. Three American tanks were disabled by the enemy's AT and tank fire. This attack was called off [illegible] the [illegible] of Hatten. After withdrawing, [illegible] occupied positions [illegible] the [illegible] edge of [illegible] [illegible] in [illegible], 10 January.****

Enemy reinforcements were brought into Hatten during the early [illegible] of [illegible] January.***** [illegible] artillery [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]. The enemy [illegible] was [illegible] [illegible] the northeast of [illegible] [illegible].

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* - S-3 Report, 315th Infantry Regiment.
** - Operations Report - 48th Tank Bn, [illegible].
*** - Ibid.
**** - Operations Report - 48th Tank Bn, [illegible].
***** - S-3 Report, 315th Infantry Regiment.

- - - -

[illegible]

[illegible] the [illegible] of [illegible]. [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

in reserve. Upon reaching the open field enemy fire was directed at the Americans from [illegible] [illegible]. To avoid this fire, the [illegible] Battalion was moved hurriedly to defilade on the southern side of the railroad tracks. "A" Company retained their positions in the field, the men using ditches along the line of departure for protection. The [illegible], to the right rear of that Company, pulled into the woods south of the railroad tracks to avoid a concentration of tracer and ball ammo fire from enemy automatic weapons, which was fire coming from the [illegible] prepared [illegible]. The woods, although [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] afforded complete protection for "B" Company. These same fields were being [illegible] by the [illegible] Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron.

As a result of this harassing fire the jump off was delayed approximately ten minutes. However, the companies [illegible] [illegible] [illegible], [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] and [illegible] [illegible]. [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] to cover the advance of the attack.

The [illegible] [illegible] between the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] to be [illegible] [illegible]. The first open terrain [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]. The [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] in a gradual slope to the north of [illegible] [illegible] the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]. The [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible], [illegible] the protection of [illegible] [illegible]. [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] any [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the east of [illegible]. [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the Americans [illegible] [illegible] the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] in [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] north, east and [illegible] of [illegible].

"A" Company, 19th AIB, moving slightly faster [illegible], crossed the [illegible] and reached a line approximately 300 yards east of the [illegible] Road Station ([illegible]) where heavy mortar, artillery, small arms and automatic weapons fire halted their advance. [illegible] firing from the buildings on the northeastern edge of [illegible] as well as from dug in [illegible] positions in the same area.

[illegible], [illegible] had pulled back slightly at the [illegible] to relieve the bunched up situation, which then existed. "B" Company [illegible], [illegible] ([illegible]) [illegible]. At the same time [illegible] and [illegible] in the [illegible].* The [illegible] called for tank support [illegible] Lt. [illegible] [illegible] for the [illegible].

Five medium tanks, "B" Company, [illegible] Tank Battalion [illegible] supported by direct tank fire from [illegible] the [illegible] of "A" Company, which were firing [illegible] into the [illegible] edge of [illegible]. [illegible] from the [illegible] Tank Battalion [illegible] firing [illegible] from [illegible] position.

The five tanks commanded by 1st Lt. [illegible] [illegible] the open [illegible] in line formation to give direct support to "A" and "B" Companies of the 19th AIB. [illegible] and [illegible]. The tanks [illegible] approximately [illegible] yards [illegible] road [illegible]. [illegible] artillery fire from the direction of [illegible]. All the [illegible] [illegible] by the [illegible] of [illegible] on the [illegible]. Pfc [illegible] [illegible],

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* - 19th AIB Journal.

[redacted] Company, view the sickening sight of a helmet spinning and over [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted] machine gun into the Hatten railroad station. The American tanks fired [redacted] had used in an effort to aid the infantrymen. Of the five tanks sent forward, two were knocked out and the other three tanks continued to [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

however, brought down small arms and machine gun fire from Hatten.

[illegible] of the [illegible] to withdraw. This decision was [illegible] by [illegible], Commanding Officer, 8th Cavalry, who, while [illegible], was [illegible] in a [illegible] on the open [illegible]. He was [illegible] Field Artillery Battalion, who was attempting to adjust smoke and fire on the southern edge of Hatten to shield the troops*. Palecek was using [illegible], and [illegible] successful in his attempt.

[illegible] of "B" [illegible], the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]. [illegible], and [illegible] to make contact, Lt. Thoron ordered T/Sgt. J. Conroy to contact Captain Thomas E. Conboy, Commanding Officer, Company "B" who was positioned at the edge of the woods, (16.9-32.6). In order to make himself as light as possible, [illegible] Conroy [illegible] the woods, [illegible]. After making approximately 250 yards the Sgt. reached Capt. Conboy. When he had reached the [illegible], Conroy gave the Company's [illegible] to [illegible], "Pies poor, gotta' get out". Capt Conboy tried to contact battalion for [illegible] the company.

[illegible], he [illegible] to [illegible], [illegible] [illegible] Company men in the field, gave the order for withdrawal to his men. [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]. [illegible] Company's left flank was exposed by "A" Company's departure, Blair co-

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* - [illegible] AAFB [illegible].

[illegible] first. Li[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] hole to steady it. Thorpson kept up this fire even after being injured.

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the woods where the difficult task of reorganizing the men began. A defensive line was set up, approximately 1000 yards southeast of the line of defense in Foret D'Aschbruck where the troops began to dig in. [illegible] on the field were trought up to the men.

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] into the bunker in a state of shock and were then treated for injury. To relieve their nervous tension, Capt. Spokes assured the men that the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

One of these men, Pfc Marlowe D. Gebhart said, "Captain Spokes, I'll [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

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* [illegible]

keep up their spirits.

The additional men did not help the already crowded situation in the bunker which was approximately ten feet long, five feet wide and three feet deep. "But it sure felt good to get off that field and into the ground."* Radio contact was unsuccessfully attempted with [illegible] placed on the southern edge of Patton by the remaining men in the field [illegible]. [illegible] Spokes if he could try to make it back across the field to get the [illegible]. [illegible] finally made it back.

Captain Spokes attempted to get the SCR 300 in working order. Contact was finally established and at approximately 1500, Jake began to [illegible] make a break for it, as the tanks come up.". At the same time a platoon of [illegible]

Unarmed-marked jeep ambulances evacuated the wounded from the open [illegible] was administered to the patients. Sixty-two casualties were carried into [illegible] Some of the men exaggerated the number but every clue was traced until all buried were cared for.

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* - Sgt. [illegible], Interview, 1945.

[illegible] the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

[illegible] of the [illegible] already in [illegible].

A platoon of "C" Company, [illegible] AIB, [illegible] on the north side of [illegible] received a [illegible] enemy attack during the night. The enemy [illegible] from the north and with [illegible] and [illegible] the platoon out of the houses they were occupying. The "C" Company platoon took up a defensive position in a house on the [illegible] side of [illegible]. [illegible] and confusion, [illegible] followed the platoon into the house. Two Krauts threw hand grenades and [illegible] with their guns. Sgt. [illegible] one of the Krauts [illegible], "why don't you Yankees [illegible]?". [illegible] the Americans [illegible] up [illegible]. The [illegible] from [illegible] the [illegible]. The [illegible] [illegible] American [illegible].* The [illegible] the [illegible] and the local enemy attack subsided.

At approximately [illegible], [illegible] communications officer, contacted Lt. Blair in order to get four men to help carry wire [illegible] [illegible] the Krauts and [illegible] [illegible] "C" Company. [illegible] The Kraut [illegible].

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* - [illegible]

a Jerry to the rear opened up with a "Thurp" gun directed at the Americans. [illegible] Pvt. [illegible] shot the German and [illegible] "[illegible]" and then fired at the [illegible] group, [illegible]. [illegible] nature were prevalent throughout the campaign.

[illegible] by enemy patrols who attempted to infiltrate into American positions. GI's were very conscious of the closeness of the enemy during the night.

[illegible] A [illegible] was [illegible]. [illegible] were [illegible]. [illegible] the enemy [illegible] patrols [illegible]. The men in the extreme western part of Hatten feld uneasy about the enemy [illegible].* [illegible] half [illegible] with Hatten [illegible] Jerry's [illegible] position.

[illegible] tanks, the protected enemy route north of Hatten to Rittershoffen would be under control. Both tanks and infantry were to combine their efforts [illegible] ing of 14 January. After medium tanks of the 47th Tank Battalion had moved into position to support the attack, "A" Company of the 19th AIB [illegible] "B" [illegible]

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* - [illegible]
** - [illegible]

flanked the northern street from the east while the [illegible] came up from the [illegible]. The plan was to join in a pincer movement enveloping the street from both ends while the tanks drove up the middle.*

[illegible], machine gun and small arms fire met the [illegible] attack. One of the tanks was hit but continued forward until [illegible] by the [illegible]. The [illegible] were [illegible] by the [illegible]. [illegible] of the [illegible] were [illegible] to withdraw from the [illegible] and finally [illegible] the main force. A [illegible] was left to occupy a [illegible] in the [illegible] and of [illegible] in the [illegible] street [illegible] east and west.

At approximately 2100, "A" and "B" Companies received a [illegible] from [illegible] Infantry who crawled down from the [illegible] in the [illegible] of heavy [illegible]. This [illegible] was reinforced by [illegible] from the [illegible] and at [illegible] a mortar fire from the [illegible]. The [illegible] had reached the [illegible] in the northern [illegible] street. Another [illegible] from the [illegible] was pushed to the north. The [illegible] was a terrific [illegible] of fire and machine gun bullets. Many [illegible] of the [illegible] were forced to withdraw from the [illegible] which had [illegible] [illegible] heavy [illegible] casualties and [illegible] prisoners. After the [illegible] fire, [illegible] called in [illegible] heavy [illegible] fire in the [illegible]. The [illegible] were the [illegible] of [illegible] [illegible] by the [illegible]. [illegible] fire [illegible] and [illegible]. A [illegible] [illegible], [illegible] and [illegible] [illegible] accounted for the [illegible] of a [illegible] building. The [illegible] turned [illegible] [illegible] of a [illegible] fire [illegible] building on the [illegible] [illegible]. The [illegible] [illegible] of [illegible] and [illegible] [illegible] the

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* - Capt. [illegible] in. [illegible], Ont., [illegible], [illegible] 1944

[illegible]

[illegible] is used to denote crawling through the blown-out sides and windows of [illegible] their way south to the main street joining up with the other companies [illegible] Jerry's attack. The units consolidated their positions.

At approximately 1730, a strong enemy attack commenced from the east [illegible] Company out of three houses they [illegible] east of [illegible] the enemy.**

In order to regain the three houses that "F" Company had lost, 2d [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

the men of "C" Company and slowly [illegible] [illegible] the rubble-littered main street.

At "Y" intersection, two advancing [illegible] were halted in anticipation of making close contact with the enemy in the next few moments. Two tank sought the cover of "Y" street running south off main street. As the group moved [illegible], once more two tanks [illegible] into a position which [illegible] it silhouetted against a burning building. [illegible] the east end of main street, two [illegible] rounds from an American tank found [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] of the tank at "Y" intersection, hardly distinguishable in the [illegible] [illegible]. These [illegible] rounds came from an American tank parked on the western [illegible] of [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the silhouetted tank to be enemy.* The [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] within the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]. [illegible], "C" company was on the south side of main street [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] of the buildings on main street and [illegible] the burning tank. [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] support [illegible] [illegible] the continued [illegible]. [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the burning tank which was by this time [illegible]. [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible].**

Meanwhile, "C" Company had [illegible] [illegible] the [illegible] buildings [illegible] enemy [illegible], between main [illegible] and [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] action. [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the burning tank and [illegible] [illegible] the enemy. "C"

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* - [illegible]

** - [illegible]

Company again pressed forward. The tank pulled to the south side of main street out of the field of fire from the slight bend in the road ahead. This bend was the crucial point in the entire village. Jerry tanks were around the eastern side of the bend, American armor commanded the western side of the bend. [illegible] positions were like the barrel of [illegible] around [illegible] of the [illegible].

After gaining the rubble of two more buildings on this side of main street the enemy [illegible] halt of the advance with bazooka, machine gun and small arms fire.

The American medium again came forward and fired its [illegible] machine gun into suspected enemy positions. The Germans quickly retaliated with a barrage of bazooka fire which forced the tank to withdraw. In an effort to flank the enemy from the north, Capt. [illegible] led a platoon of tanks ([illegible] Tank Bn) on the north of the main street in [illegible]. Three of these tanks were knocked out by German bazooka and artillery fire. The remaining [illegible] tanks withdrew to the assembly area at the foot of "Y" Street.*

The [illegible] and [illegible] platoons of "[illegible]" Company combined into one unit. The [illegible] of twenty men were brought up to aid the other platoons of [illegible] Company. These support units enabled their parent organizations to gain [illegible] more building thus occupying all that "[illegible]" Company had taken. The operation had taken five hours to accomplish and "[illegible]" Company was [illegible] as they made ready to hold what was left of the ground [illegible] had captured.

A German counterattack was not long in coming. One hour later an [illegible] from the north [illegible] positions. In the face of bazookaand "burp" gun fire, the platoon

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* - Marked "Y" on the map

withdrew to the [illegible]. This action left the men of 'C' Company on the southern side of Main Street, with an exposed left flank. To overcome this situation, the men moved to the rear approximately 75 yards, where they drew abreast of the 3d platoon on the northern side of Main Street. [illegible] [illegible] and good fields of fire over the [illegible] [illegible] of the [illegible] building in this [illegible] was decided to hold. The enemy attempted to advance [illegible] but was quickly [illegible] with [illegible] [illegible], [illegible] and [illegible] [illegible] fire. The Company spent the remainder of the night [illegible], [illegible] and [illegible] [illegible] "[illegible]" about the [illegible] of [illegible], the [illegible] in [illegible], and all [illegible] in general. This action was typical of the small unit engagements in the ensuing days. Americans would attack and win several shattered buildings. Then the Germans would counterattack. If the enemy infantry could not advance, their tanks and artillery came to support them. This was true of both sides in the see-saw struggle for Hatten, as well as Rittershoffen.**

During the dark hours of the morning, elements of [illegible] Troop of the [illegible] Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron relieved 'C' Company in their present position. The enemy continued to fire intermittent small arms, machine gun, bazooka, mortar and artillery into the [illegible] edge of Hatten. One of the artillery rounds [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] of 'C' Company located on the northern outskirts of Hatten.

Much of the battle was an artillery duel between the Americans and Germans. All through the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] to both sides by the constant shuffling of additional pieces [illegible], [illegible], and AT ammunition. [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] of the [illegible] in Hatten during the ensuing [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

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* - [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
** - [illegible] [illegible], [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
*** - Major [illegible] [illegible] [illegible], [illegible], [illegible]

delayed fuzes [illegible] close to the [illegible] of [illegible] [illegible] before explosion. White Phosphorous was used by both Americans and Germans. The enemy in using White Phosphorous apparently [illegible] [illegible] from white smoke, [illegible] they do not have any of their own.*

Illustrative of the amount of artillery thrown into the [illegible] area of [illegible] and [illegible] are the figures taken from the [illegible] and [illegible] Armd Field Artillery Battalions.* During the [illegible] [illegible] battalions fired approximately [illegible] rounds of high explosive and [illegible] [illegible] rounds of White Phosphorous from light artillery pieces (105mm howitzers) on different days during the battle. [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] and [illegible] mortars, 105 S/P guns and howitzers, [illegible] [illegible] and [illegible], [illegible] howitzers and 8" guns were used by American artillery to harass and repel the Germans. VI Corps artillery, in addition to those [illegible], [illegible] fired in the area - [illegible] and [illegible] from the period 7 January to [illegible] January.****

At 0800 16 January, Major Forest T. Green, CO of [illegible] AIB, informed Lt. Young via SCR 300 that "B" Company of the [illegible] Infantry would attack through "C" Company's positions. At [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] of the Company came down the main street to "C" Company's positions. Lt. Young called to the officer in charge and gave him the situation. He added a word of caution about [illegible] the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] of the [illegible]. The officer [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] Company continued [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]. [illegible] [illegible] of "C" Company's position [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible], [illegible], [illegible] [illegible], [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

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* - S-3 Reports, [illegible] Div., and [illegible] Army [illegible]

** - [illegible]

*** - S-3 Reports, [illegible] Armd FA Bn Arty

**** - [illegible]

***** - Lt. Richard M. Young, Jr., "C" Co, 19th AIB

[illegible] "E" Company to [illegible]. [illegible]

[illegible] battalion staff [illegible]. Major Green then said, "Young, you'll have to make the attack, since "E" [illegible]." [illegible] men will feel after seeing what happened to "Easy" Company?" [illegible] thought a moment, then said, "All right, we'll see Lt. Col. Earl F. [illegible] candles. Major Green explained the situation to Colonel Holton. The [illegible]

[illegible] ing, "Yeah, I know, but we're going anyway.". To support the attack, [illegible] BARs and rifles. The 1st and 2d platoons jumped off. The men were mad [illegible] Company again reached the ruins they had been forced to evacuate the [illegible]

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* – [illegible]

felt better as they again prepared to hold what they had. The soldiers [illegible] tank departed "C" Company was also forced to withdraw in the face of [illegible] A [illegible] Germans were hidden behind a manure pile and were firing their weapon [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] as well as the [illegible] town.* [illegible] and artil- [illegible] north, west of "Y" intersection.

An OP was established in a building called the "Fort". This con- [illegible] east of "Y" intersection.** [illegible] the first street to the east which ran north, outposts of twelve men [illegible]

[illegible] in the direction of noises which later proved to be stray horses and [illegible]

[illegible]

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* - Lt. Russel T. Blair, Co "B"; S/Sgt. [illegible] S. Pidgeon, Sgt. Earle [illegible]
** - [illegible]

number nearest the oncoming tank. Before he got the number, the tank let fly [illegible] [illegible] American artillery [illegible] vicinity of the enemy tank [illegible]

[illegible] can positions. When the artillery caught any of them, Germans could be [illegible] screams gave way to moaning and heavy sobbing. Jerry used an old trick [illegible]

[illegible] were ten yards from the barn before squeezing the trigger. One died instantly. It took three more rounds to finish the other.

[redacted]

[redacted] to "flush-out" the enemy. The platoon routed two Germans out of a building and took them prisoners. The Jerries were "pumped". Information [redacted]. [redacted] attack. 2d Lt. Joseph Osborne, in charge of the American platoon, [redacted] commander of Jerries". Reception on the battalion SCR 300 was bad. The [redacted] attacked by T.N.T. Jerries", radioed back, "Continue the assault". The [redacted] elements of the three company infantry attack.

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[illegible]

Sgt. [illegible] platoon [illegible]. [illegible] fire from a second platoon of [illegible] Company [illegible].

[illegible] Both tanks commenced to fire into houses occupied by "B" and "C" Companies. [illegible] the rubble of the buildings firing everything in the book.

[illegible] -ally aided the withdrawal by laying a supporting concentration of [illegible] gun fire. With a belt of ammo over his shoulder, [illegible] fired his light [illegible] he was occupying. The Pvt said jokingly, "I'm a commando", as he held [illegible] launchers, machine gun fire, small arms and hand grenades. This fire [illegible]

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* - As the battle for [illegible] progressed during the coming days, so many [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] tinued throughout the day. One of the German rounds scored a direct hit on Capt. Thomas E. Conboy, killing the commander of [illegible] Company. 1st Lt. Russell T. Blair, took charge of the Company after Capt. Conboy [illegible].

[illegible] tempting to steal into American positions. Artillery from both sides found its mark, adding to the many dead who lay where they had fallen. Cold weather kept the bodies from deteriorating, preventing a stench [illegible] only decaying dead men can produce. American sentries, maintaining vi[illegible] were sometimes obliged to secure positions very close to their dead comrades for days on end.*

[illegible] plies previously parachuted to the 315th Infantry aid men. Captain Charles Hawkins, surgeon and medical Tec 3 Robert Munson had been loaded into a tank with medical supplies to set up the aid station in Hatten. This was Captain Hawkins' first ride in a tank. "All the Captain wanted to know about the tank was the location of the escape hatch."

Sgt. Munson and his men constantly checked for casualties by going through the debris of the houses in Hatten. When locating a casualty, Munson had litter bearers carry the man back. These litter bearers did

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[illegible]

[illegible]. After [illegible], an aid man from the 315th Infantry said, "Hold up, I'm going to drop the litter". The other men suggested he use two hands instead of the one he was using to carry the litter. The tired aid man replied, "I can't", and held up the stump of his other arm.*

Temporary treatment was given at the aid station in Hatten. To evacuate the casualties out of the town, half tracks and light tanks were loaded with American wounded. Litter cases were stretched across the backs of the tanks and the half tracks. The vehicles took the wounded men back to Niederbetschdorf via the exit leading from "Y" [illegible].

[illegible]

[illegible] night. The route used was from "Y" Street south to the railroad tracks and thence west to Niederbetschdorf. As one half-track was taking its precious load of wounded to Niederbetschdorf, the vehicle was struck by [illegible] Lt. Robert L. French [illegible]. [illegible]

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* - [illegible]

[illegible] in the [illegible]

[illegible] doughnuts were sent to the fighters in Hatten. Rear echelon men of the [illegible] engaged in the battle.

[illegible] more appetizing. S/Sgt Weldon S. Shickel, (Co "A") had his mortar [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] picking off pigeons with his M-1 while a lull existed in the battle.

[illegible] Lt. [illegible]

[illegible] infantry [illegible] flame-throwing tank.[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

and rest. The bombardment last continuously until 0900. "Men who had [illegible] in lieu of that barrage on Hatten".*

[illegible] horne, in command of the group. The little girl looked very clean in [illegible] Dodel". Lt. Osborne understood the German words and answered, "Yes". [illegible]

[illegible] = [illegible]
** = 2d Lt. Joseph Osborne, "A" Co, 19th AIB
*** = [illegible]

were threatened in the fire that started immediately. [illegible] collapse in the upstairs structure. A new aid station [illegible] the cellar of another building to accomodate the [illegible] blown up when the aid station was initially hit. Until [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] American lines was pushed back until reaching both sides of the street [illegible] fire guns, small arms fire and hand grenades prevented the enemy tanks and infantrymen from advancing through the wreckage of main street. The [illegible]

Bossette. These men lay wounded where they had fallen, [illegible] as soon as possible. Bossette replied, "Don't [illegible]".

S/Sgt Mathias, "B" Company, 47th Tank Battalion b[illegible] to the south of the town worked its way toward the barn located b[illegible] the barn. Unwounded Americans scattered in a mad melee. Lt. Young [illegible] [illegible] fire, falling close to American occupied houses, began finding its [illegible]

grenade fire of approximately 75 infantrymen from the "fort" [illegible] the tank. But there was still a serious threat from the German [illegible] who were swarming in from the northeast and [illegible]. The [illegible] attack was led by fanatical paratroopers yelling insults [illegible] bastards", while they charged,** supported by [illegible] northeast and southeast.*** Some of the German armor was [illegible] American Sherman tanks. "The 12th Armored Division lost a number of tanks some days ago, and now some of the armor is being used against us".[1] These paratroopers were of definitely superior quality and the [illegible] had learned to respect their fighting capabilities while in [illegible]. Infantrymen took the invaders on with small arms and hand grenades. A[illegible] [illegible]. [illegible] the young German paratroopers were ripped to shreds as the blast of [illegible]

[illegible]

- 315th Infantry Regiment, S-2 Report
- History, 79th Div Artillery, 1 Jan - 31 Jan 1945
- [illegible]

[illegible] , A [illegible] Company, [illegible] [illegible] , [illegible] Infantry, [illegible] elements of the 2d Chemical Battalion and the 813th and 827th [illegible] [illegible]

[illegible] and Stalingrad.*** Hatten, the once picturesque and congenial Alsatian [illegible] [illegible] food.

[illegible] sions of their silent buddies left behind, still holding the rubble of [illegible] cold snow.****

[illegible] American and German tanks, nothing more than rust colored junk now. Down in their hearts, the men were reluctant to leave this village they had fought so gallantly to hold. They felt as if they had lost the war,

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* - [illegible] Report, 315th Infantry Regiment

** - Ibid

*** - [illegible]

**** - [illegible]

had fought and suffered and died in vain.* On the contrary, however, these warriors had gained precious time by their bitter and magnificent stand. Attack after attack by the enemy had been frustrated. The Americans, "with the help of God", ** had managed to hold the best the Hitler had to offer.***

The steady pounding from both sides had brought ruin and devastation [illegible] had ridden triumphantly and unmolestingly a month before.**** This fact was particularly distasteful to the GIs since the enemy had used the same ground as a spring board for its attack.# The stress and strain on human endurance in the see-saw, house to house, barn to barn struggle [illegible].

[illegible] The [illegible] [illegible] enemy thrust, destined to play such an important part in Germany's plans had been checked. Although the main line of resistance was forced back [illegible] the German drive backfired [illegible] frustration instead of the much desired break-through over this section of the Alsatian plain.## Enemy strategy was completely neutered and be- [illegible] become a trickle.

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* [illegible] Russell T. Blair; Pfc James R. Ensminger

** - 2d Lt. Joseph Osborne, "A" Company, 19th AII.

*** - [illegible]

**** - Pfc James R. Ensminger

\# - [illegible]

- [illegible], 14th Armored Division, Lt. Col. [illegible]

[illegible] Report, 315th Infantry Regiment

[illegible] did not attempt to follow.* Enemy interference with the withdrawal was negligible although light harassing fire fell during the period.**

The withdrawal continued over ice and snow until reaching the vicinity of Haguenau, along the Moder River. Elements of the 14th Armored Division and 79th Infantry Division tied in with the [illegible] resistance. This was the line they had been patrolling time for [illegible] isations to establish. The heroes of Hatten and Rittershoffen [illegible]

Casualties of CCR in Hatten were: Killed in action, 3 Of[illegible] missing in action, 1 officer and 50 enlisted men. Equipment lost: 17 medium tanks, 5 light tanks, 1 half-track, 3, 75mm anti-tank guns, 2, SCR 500, 1, SCR 300. Enemy losses were established at: Killed in action 678; wounded in action, 1000. Enemy equipment lost: 7 Mark IV Tanks; 6 anti-tank guns, 3, S/P guns, 16 machine and 36 bazookas.****

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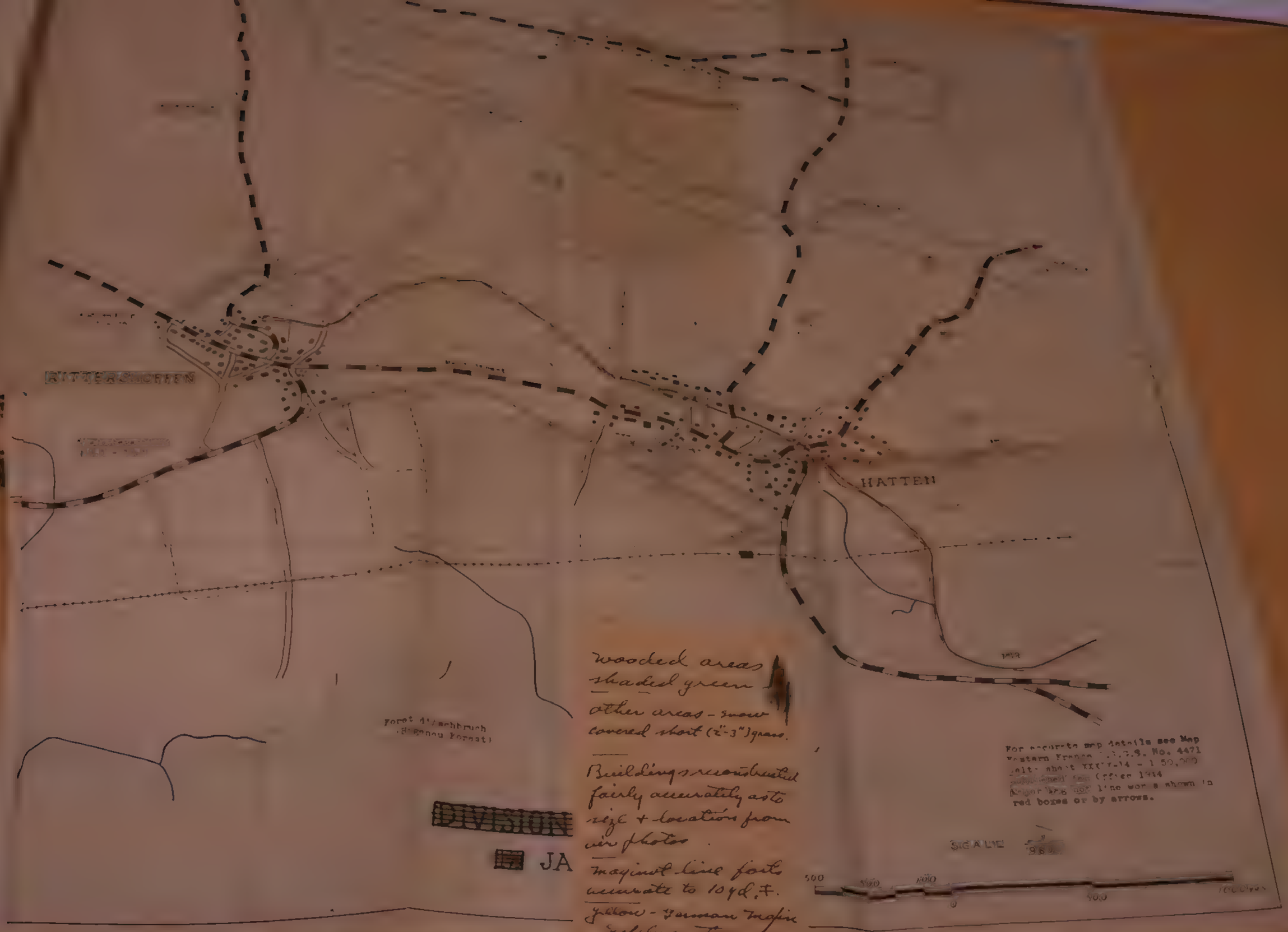
* - Division History, 79th Div, period 1 Jan - 31 Jan 45
[illegible]
[illegible] Report.

1st Lt. Edgar B. Looney, Jr.
Historical Section


HATTEN
Forêt d'Archbruch
(Hagenau Forest)
DIVISION
JA
Wooded areas shaded green
other areas - snow covered short (2"-3") grass.
Buildings reconstructed fairly accurately as to size + location from air photos.
Magnetic line fixes accurate to 10 yd. ±.
Yellow - German traffic supply routes.
For accurate map details see Map Western France U.S.G.S. No. 4471 Sheet XXXV-14 - 1:50,000 Supplement for October 1944
Larger scale map line work is shown in red boxes or by arrows.
SCALE
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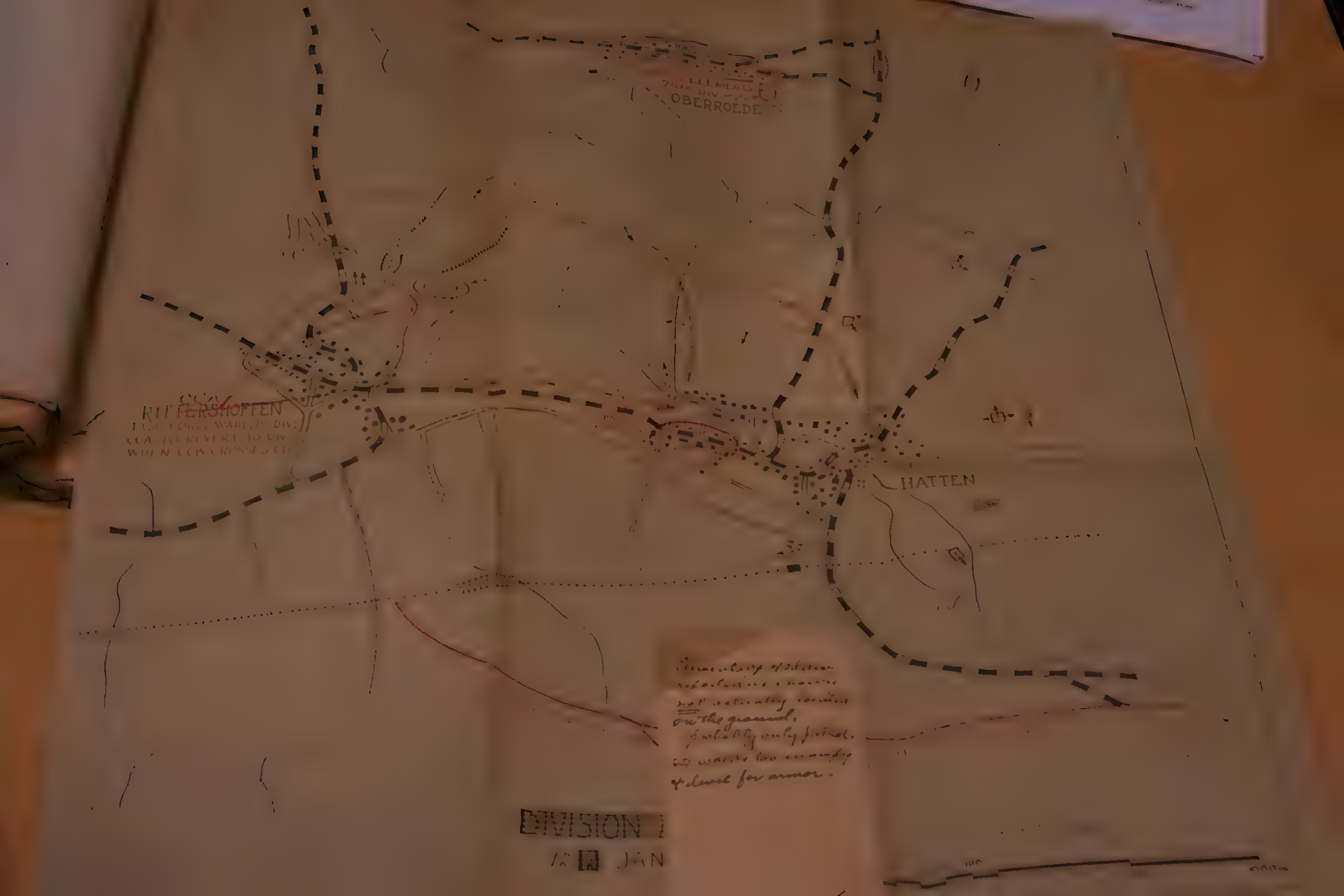
DIVISION ATTACK PLAN

12 JANUARY '45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DIVISION
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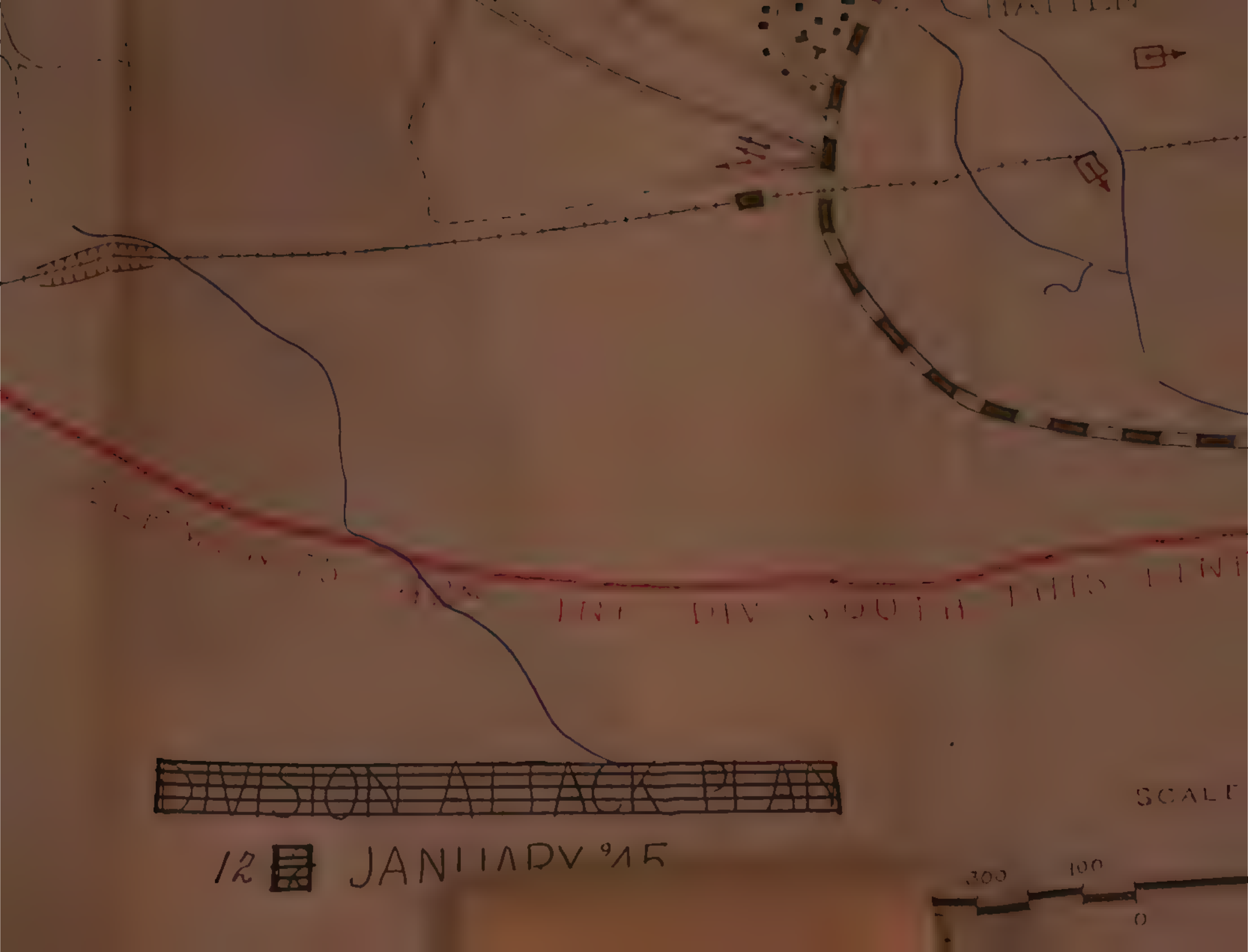
DIVISION ATTACK PLAN
12 JANUARY 945
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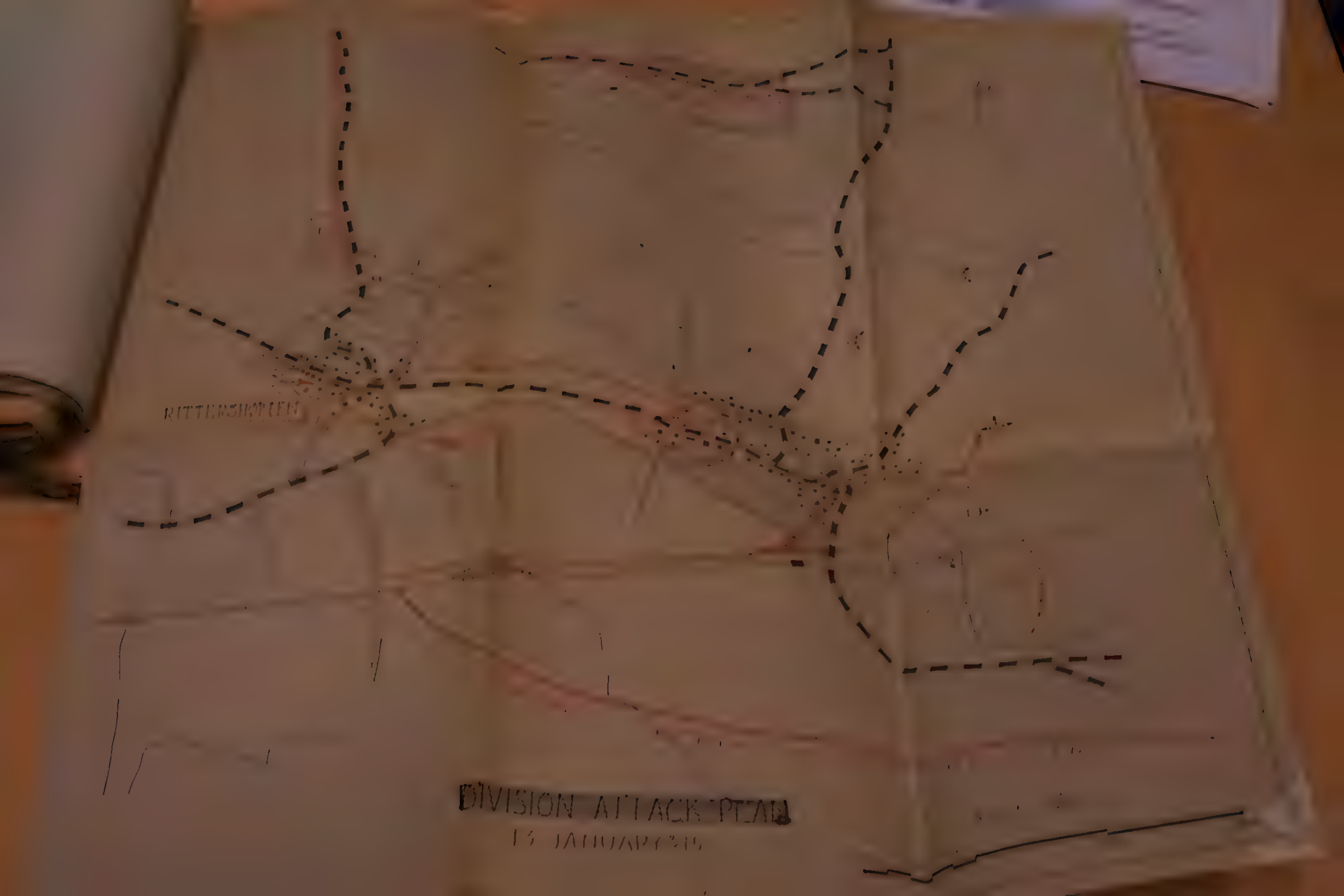
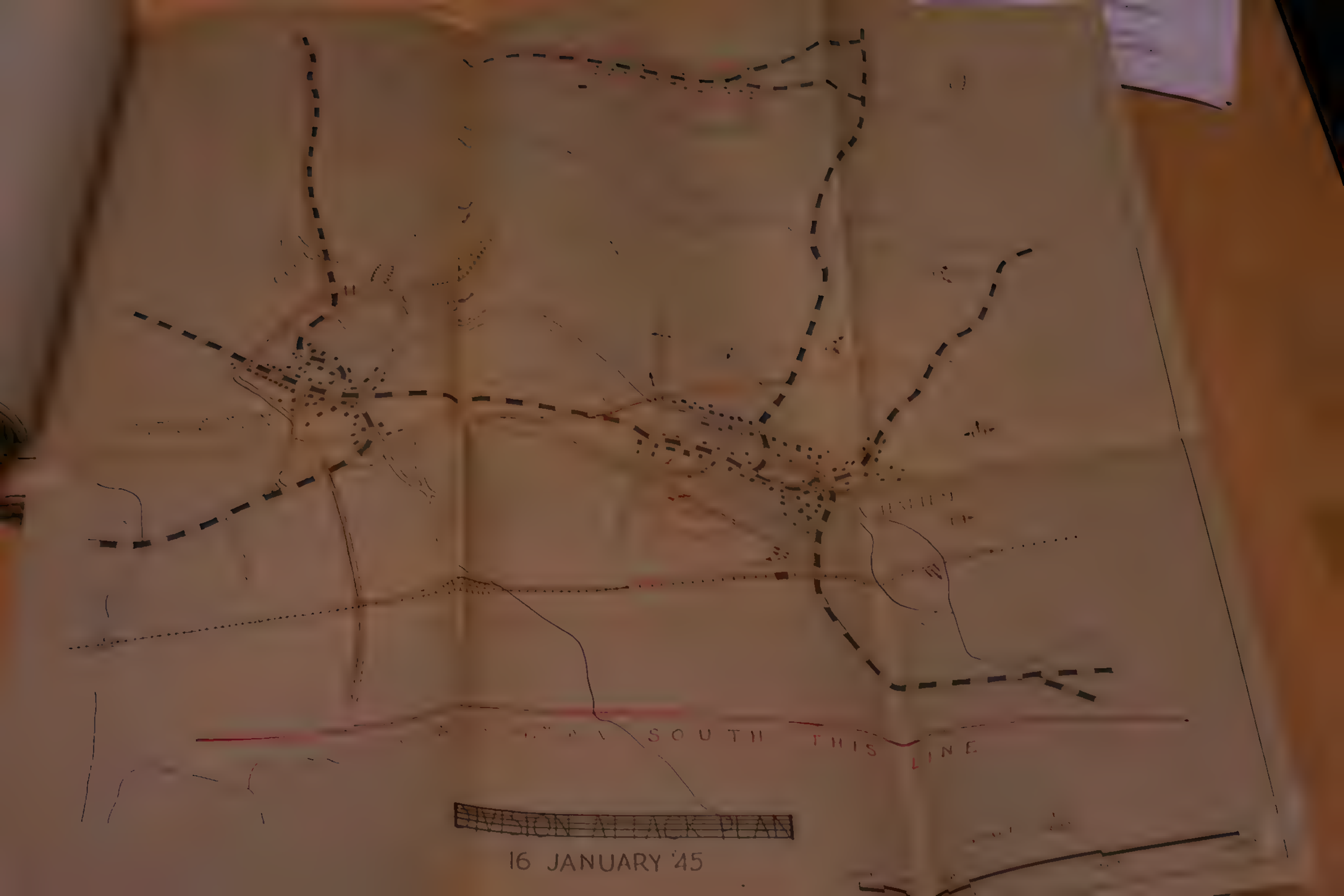

RITTERSHOFFEN
DIVISION ATTACK PLAN


SOUTH THIS LINE
DIVISION ATTACK PLAN
16 JANUARY '45

BEARCEDEPN

This comfarit of losses
was comfiled during Feb & Mar 45
checked mar 20 by actual inspection
of vehicles remaining on the ground.
comfiled by 9-3-14 armd div.

German
defines - active -
Copy of 3:pm - situation map
19 Jan. 45 -

German arty not shown.

KNOWN GERMAN DEFENSES
DIVISION ATTACK PLAN
JANUARY '45

Rest of the
Report was
Artillery maps